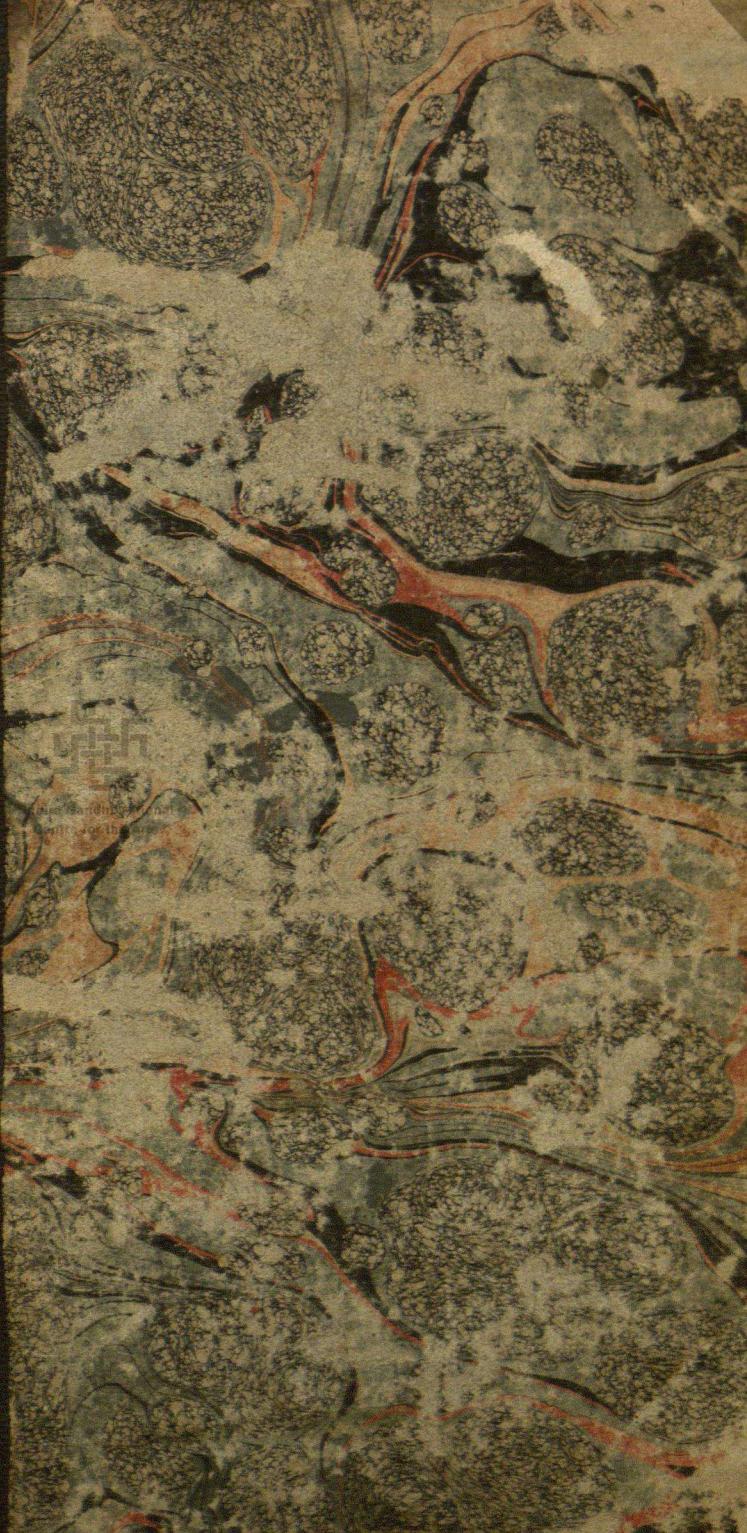




RAR
954
TEN
V,1





An Augree

INDIAN RECREATIONS ;

CONSISTING

CHIEFLY OF STRICTURES

ON THE

DOMESTIC AND RURAL ECONOMY

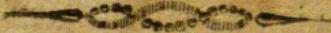
OF THE

MAHOMMEDANS & HINDOOS.

India Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

BY THE REV. WILLIAM TENNANT, LL.D. M.A.S.
AND LATELY ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS IN INDIA.

VOL. I.



EDINBURGH :

PRINTED BY C. STEWART,
AND SOLD BY T. N. LONGMAN AND C. REES, LONDON,
AND JOHN ANDERSON, EDINBURGH.

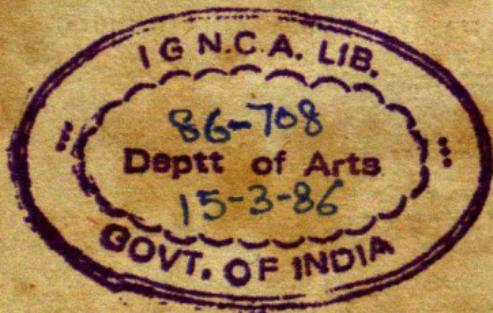
1803.

954
TEN

V. I



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts



4
TO THE

K I N G.

.....



MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,
Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THESE inquiries concerning the domestic and rural economy of the Hindoos, were originally made as the means of obtaining better information regarding the condition of a numerous people, living in a state of society and manners to me almost entirely new: They were communicated to the public, with a view of rendering the inhabitants of these remote parts of your Ma-

jesty's

jesty's dominions, better known to your subjects in Europe; and they are now humbly offered to your Majesty as a tribute of gratitude for that security and protection which their author enjoyed, in common with many millions of your subjects in the midst of Asia.

WHAT reflections may arise in your Majesty's breast, on viewing the domestic circumstances, and ^{India Gandhi National} actual condition of so large a portion of the human race, I presume not to conjecture; but your subjects can hardly contemplate without reverence and gratitude, that dispensation of Providence which has committed to your Majesty's protection and care, a more numerous people, and more extensive territories, than ever fell under the dominion of any European Mo-

narch;

narch ; because it has enabled your Councils to govern them with greater wisdom and moderation. During your long, eventful, and prosperous reign, the anarchy consequent on the downfal of the Mogul Empire, has been succeeded by order : The cruel spoliations of contending chieftains have been suspended ; arts have been encouraged ; several new manufactures have been introduced, and many more have been extended : And while the ^{India's General National} blessings of security and peace have been conferred upon a numerous people, better means have been supplied them of acquiring the knowledge of truth, and the practice of virtue : The time has arrived, when Asia, which gave the first lessons of civilization to mankind, is destined to receive them back with interest into her bosom ; and when India, the peculiar re-

gion of despotism, must experience the blessings of a mild and rational government.

I am,

May it please your Majesty,

Your Majesty's

Indira Gandhi National
Obedient Subject, and

Faithful Servant,

WILLIAM TENNANT.

PREFACE.

.....

Of the information contained in these volumes, by far the greater part is the result of personal observation, and of inquiries made upon the spot, during a residence of several years in different parts of India. The progress of the army to which I was attached, presented to my examination, during that period, a large extent of country, in a line of march of more than three thousand miles. The duties of my profession obliged me, besides, to undertake many journeys in different directions, where the army did not penetrate; and curiosity often prompted me to make shorter excursions wherever information might be procured.

THE

THE different Officers, under whom I successively served, far from embarrassing, by their official authority, encouraged these pursuits; and to Lieutenant-General Sir James Craig, Major-Generals Alexander Mackenzie, and Hay Macdowall, I am obliged for several useful topics of discussion, as well as for the most polite indulgence in the disposal of my time, on every occasion, consistent with the duties of my station in the army.

ANOTHER source of information was frequently afforded me by the conversation and writings of several intelligent natives of India, both Mussulmans and Hindoos: Whatever was found difficult or obscure, these men were referred to for elucidation, as the best qualified to decide on their own manners and institutions. Gholam Hossein Khan, Abu Taleb Khan, and Ram Jeet Sing, as often as they were consulted on doubtful points, supplied more correct information; they are men of noble birth and considerable rank, but still more distinguished among their countrymen, by their extensive knowledge and respectability of character.

My station in the army afforded me frequent opportunity of oral conversation with the most intelligent of the Honourable Company's civil and military servants ; and to their unaffected hospitality, and liberal communications, I owe many obligations. With equal pleasure and advantage I have consulted the writings of many of those Gentlemen, who from their professional labours, and long residence in the country, have become best acquainted with its affairs. The works of Sir W. Jones, Dr. Roxburgh, Dr. Hunter, Dr. Fontana, and Captain Hardwick, are not mentioned in literary circles without respect and approbation ; and of some of them the reputation is so high as leaves no room for panegyric.

I AM not without hope, therefore, that even in this eventful and dangerous period, when literary pursuits are in a great measure laid aside, that by some persons wearied with the bustle of politics, and the noise of war, these Recreations may be resorted to for the amusement of a leisure hour, and that by others whose views, or those of their friends, are turned to India, they may be perused from higher

motives. Whatever may be their fate, they are now committed to the public; and as no writer can be indifferent to what has long been the object of his labour and care, I wait its decision with some solicitude, and will bow to its sentence with perfect submission.

TABLE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOR

VOLUME FIRST.

PAGE.

INTRODUCTION.

The antiquity of the Hindoo arts—the stability of their manners, - - - -	4
Probable effects of a British government, - -	8
The Mahomedan conquests in India.	
Sterility of the Hindoo records, - - - -	11
occasioned by the cruelty of the victors, and their rapacity, - - - -	12
Decline and fall of the Mogul Empire, - -	17
Remarks on the statement given by the Abbe Reynal of the British conquests in Bengal, -	23
Origin and present state of the Mahratta empire, -	29
The extent, police, &c. of Calcutta, - -	37
Maritime trade of Calcutta.	
The imperfect state of navigation among the natives, - - - -	44
The different races of inhabitants settled in Calcutta—the Armenians—the Moguls—Greeks—Portuguese.	53

Of

Of the Bannians, and native servants—their great number in every European family.	61
Establishments for education in Calcutta. The want of employment for country born children	69
Effects of a hot climate on Europeans. General estimate of the advantages obtained by migration in India.	76
Of the rank and condition of the different classes	83
Of the ecclesiastical establishment as constituted by the East India Company,	92
Practical inconveniences of the Hindu superstition,	100
Effects of the Hindoo system on the knowledge and virtue of the people,	110
The Hindoo system as it affects social intercourse	119
<small>Indra Ganj National</small>	
Domestic slavery as permitted among the Hindoos	129
Of the antiquity of the Hindoo Scriptures. Mr Halhed's account of them examined.	139
The penances and expiations of the Hindoos,	150
Resemblance between the Jewish and Hindoo rites,	161
Of the authority claimed by the Brahmins,	173
Peculiarities of the Mussulmans. Their character—intolerance, and cruelty.	180
Hindoo notions with regard to marriage—adoption—baptism.	192
Efforts made by Europeans in the conversion of the natives,	205
Mahomedan festival of Mohurrum,	217
Religious	

	PAGE
Religious rites performed by a Fakeer at Mir-zapore—Deism professed by few persons in India,	223 230
The cruelty of the Mahomedans in India,	233
Some detached customs among the natives— merry-makings—illuminations—fire-arms.	242
Of the state of literature among the natives of India.	250
Of the distribution of justice. The Nizam—the Foujdar—Darogha of the Adawlet—the Cazi.	260
The domestic life of the Mussulmans,	269
An account of the historian Gholam Houssein Khan,	277
Of the Ayeen Acbery—a statistical account of Hindostan in the reign of Acber.	287
Of the different trades and professions practised among the natives of India,	297
The state of married women among the Mahomedans—a vindication of their rights by Abu Taleb,	305 306
Description of Cawnpore, an European cantonment,	322
Mode of living among the military and civil officers—dissipation—danger of military usurpation ideal.	330
Idea of the Mogul empire in the reign of Acber, Civil and military regulations of that prince.	338
General idea of the Mahratta government—statement of Mr Tone.	355 Defence

Defence of the country—character of the native troops.

370

Of the servants of the Company—their emoluments unequal—conjecture regarding their future condition.

377

ERRATA.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

ERRATA.

.....

PAGE.

- 11 in the note, for Bagrat, read Bagvat.
15 l. 4. for Belloti, read Belloli.
51 l. 8. from bottom, for mariner, read mariners.
55 l. last, for is, read has been supposed.
184 l. 8. from bottom, for Hoffeim, read Hoffein.
192 bottom, for fradha, read fradha.
260 l. 2. from the bottom, for puianos, read puranas.
301 l. 5. from bottom, for price, read piece.
335 l. 11. for fail, read fall
339 l. 3. for Altork, read Attock.
355 l. 5. for six hundred millions, read six millions.

INDIAN RECREATIONS.



INTRODUCTION.

.....

Calcutta, Sept. 1796.

THE peninsula of Hindostan, containing all the principal settlements which have been formed by the European nations on the continent of Asia, is in extent nearly equal to Europe. In geographical language, this name is applied only to that tract which is bounded on the west and east by the Indus and the Barrampooter; on the north by the mountains of Thibet and Tartary; and on the south by the river Nirbudda, and the lower boundaries of Bengal and Bahar. The extremity of the peninsula, which contained nearly one half of the Mogul empire, among the Indian geographers, received the appellation of *Deccan*, or South *. In the ancient language

A

of

* Vid. Major Rennel's Mem. p. 19. Introd.

of Hindostan, this name is not found; the country is in the Sanscreek styled Bharata. The name of India was adopted by the Greeks, from the Persians, and is of comparatively modern application *. In a period long before the most ancient European records, this part of Asia had attained to some degree of civilization, and had made considerable progress in the arts of life. Since the earliest commencement of authentic history in Europe, its manufactures, science, and religion, have attracted the attention of every state in that quarter of the world.

OUR admiration of what is ancient, has, however, been excessive; and prompted historians for upwards of twenty centuries to exaggerate their accounts of oriental attainments beyond the truth. The improvement of the Hindoos has, unquestionably, been much earlier than that of any nation in Europe; but it is equally certain that their attainments in almost all the arts are less considerable: They are now nearly in the same state as they were two thousand years ago†, when they were far surpassed in many particulars both by the Greeks and Romans.

THEY, as well as the Chinese, have brought the more useful arts to a degree of perfection requisite for the common purposes of life; but the efforts either

* Vid. Translat. of the Hectopades, by Mr. Wilkins, p. 332.
† Dr Robertson's Disquis. Appendix.

ther of curiosity, or of their genius, have never carried them beyond this point. The mediocrity of their skill in the arts necessary for defence, has been always conspicuous ; for they have been successively conquered by the Persians, the Patans, the Moguls, and modern nations of Europe. That very people whom European discipline has since rendered so formidable, had uniformly been accustomed to yield up their rich country an easy prey to every invader ; and had, perhaps, seldom a dynasty of princes from their own countrymen.

HERODOTUS is the earliest European historian who makes mention of this country ; his work was composed 440 years before our æra. Even then, it had begun to experience the calamities of invasion ; for it was partly conquered by Darius Hystaspes*. Alexander's expedition to the banks of the Indus, first communicated to Europeans authentic information concerning that part of India which has since obtained the name of the Panjab, or Five Rivers, the sources of the Indus, down which part of the Greecian troops were conducted by Nearchus. Megasthenes, the ambassador of Seleucus, during his long residence at Palibothra, transmitted farther information ; of which Strabo, Pliny, and Arrian have availed themselves in the accounts they have given of India. Its commerce, which at first centered in

Tyre

* Herodot. lib. iv.

Tyre*, was afterwards transferred to Alexandria ; when it was conducted by the Greeks, Romans, and Venetians, till the discovery of a passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope.

DURING all this period, containing two thousand years, the Hindoo manners and customs have experienced very little change. Their knowledge, their manufactures, and arts ; even their dress, and modes of living, are described as being exactly in the same state they are at present. The following particulars, noticed by Arrian, will present to the mind of every person who has visited India, a picture of their present customs and manners by no means inaccurate. “ Their bodies are slender in form ; their diet principally vegetables ; they are divided into castes, and subordinate classes ; and the same trade is perpetuated in a family, from generation to generation. Marriages are permitted at seven years of age ; but prohibited between different classes †. The men wear ear-rings ; party-coloured shoes, and frequently veils, which cover the head and shoulders. The lower orders have their faces daubed with colours,

* Hiram, its king, was contemporary with Solomon ; and the sacred writers frequently mention the wealth of that city. Vid. Ezekiel's Prop.

† Not consummated till the age of puberty ; and in the institutes of Menu, intermarriages of the different classes are recognized as valid, but stigmatized as *contra bonos mores*.

lours, while the higher ranks have umbrellas carried over them. Two-handed swords are carried about; with bows, whose strings are drawn by the foot." Their ingenuity in catching elephants, and their method of manufacturing cotton, are all noticed in terms not inapplicable to their present state *.

THIS singular stability displayed in the manners of Indians, must be imputed to their religion. The Braminical rites and institutions enter into every part of their manners, and guide almost every action of their lives. Whatever these injoin, is therefore unalterable; for it is by them regarded not merely with that veneration which men pay to ancient customs, but as the injunctions of Heaven which it were impiety to violate. Hence the manners of the Hindoos have remained unaffected by those invasions and insurrections which have so often changed the condition of society in other countries. They have resisted equally the enthusiasm and cruelty of the Mahomedan, and the feebler efforts of European missionaries, for their conversion.

THOUGH this be the state in which the Hindoos were found by the first Europeans who visited their country, there is no reason to conclude, that prior to that period, they were not in a state comparatively rude; and that they gradually emerged from that primeval

* Vid. Hist. Arrian. *passim.*

primeval barbarity in which nature has decreed to envelope the origin of nations. History affords direct testimony of this fact. Those writers already mentioned, notice that they were ruled by independent princes, whose territories, by the smallness of their extent, seemed to announce the limited progress they had made in social union, and their humble attainments in the art of government. Their caves in Elephanta and Salfette, are standing monuments of the original gloomy state of their superstition, and the imperfection of their arts, particularly that of architecture, which is, perhaps, the most intricate and laborious of any.

THE Hindoo attainments in the arts, however, such as they are, have uniformly supplied the materials of a trade to the western world, which has enriched every nation engaged in it. There a passion for Indian manufactures has actuated the higher ranks of society in every age; and has conferred a degree of importance upon those nations who have imported them, which they could not otherwise have attained.

THE territories obtained by the British in this part of the world, though later in their acquisition; in extent and importance far surpass what has ever fallen to the lot of any other nation. With a circumscribed territory at home, they have reached a very high degree of eminence among the nations of Europe, while their dominion in Hindostan, and

their

their commercial intercourse with the rest of Asia, confers upon them a greater influence on the happiness of mankind, than the most extensive empire of China can boast. Time alone can discover whether their connection with the Hindoos shall be more effectual in meliorating their condition, than that of the various nations who have reduced them under their subjection.

If this effect shall follow, so deeply interesting to a large portion of our fellow creatures, it must be the result of an enlarged knowledge of their interests as connected with our own. The immense resources of England, which, in all our wars, have astonished the nations of Europe, are created and supplied by our commerce; and of this, the trade of India is the most considerable branch.
India's Commercial National
Commerce The fate of the one country is involved in that of the other: with her possessions in Asia Great Britain must stand or fall.

THE investigations of the Agricultural Board have already produced a mass of useful information, possessed by no other nation in Europe. The views or claims of interest and of advantage, are equally strong for a similar statistical account of India: should that measure be carried into effect with equal ability, an obligation of the highest importance would be conferred by that institution upon their country.

A SET of printed queries sent to every commercial resident, factor, or other officer in each district, would,

would, in the course of a few years, determine how fully such a measure was practicable. Diligent enquiry would soon ascertain the most important articles of investigation: such as the number of the inhabitants; the particular manufactures, or labour, in which the people are employed in each district; the rate of their wages, and the expence of their living; the different branches of husbandry, such as the tenure by which the farmers hold their possessions; the rent, and different kinds of produce, with their value in the market.

WERE all these particulars fully known, a thousand means of at once improving the revenue and the condition of the people, would occur, which at present are either concealed, or left to vague conjecture. Pliny made the Romans acquainted, in some degree, with the state of India, while they had no possessions there, and when that people could not affect the condition of the natives. The trade carried on with it seemed to him so immense, as to interest every member of the state; yet the commerce of the Romans with India did not exceed fifty millions of festerces* annually, or about one tenth part of that of Britain, exclusive of her immense territorial revenues†. The very distance of our possessions alone seems to require that some means should be adopted

* The gross revenue of Bengal and the upper provinces is stated at six millions, and four millions more may be regarded as the amount of the other provinces.

† 440,000L.

dopted of laying local knowledge before its legislators, and the executive government. No part of the Roman empire, large as it was, exceeded the distance of two thousand miles from the capital * ; a knowledge of its provinces could more easily be acquired and disseminated among the people, than in a state, the greater part of whose dominions lie fifteen thousand miles in a direct route from the seat of Government. If the following sketches shall in any manner prove introductory to such a work, by demonstrating the practicability of the undertaking, the labour bestowed in compiling them, will be amply rewarded ; and their author will have the satisfaction of having neither lived nor written in vain.

HE is fully sensible of the many imperfections with which his lucubrations must abound. The subject is too extensive to be thoroughly investigated by one person : neither his health nor his time permitted him to pay it all that attention which it justly merits. All, therefore, pretended by the following strictures, is a short view of the different subjects, which he holds out to be farther discussed, and finished by other hands. He has the comfort to reflect, that no part is wilfully mistated, nor any man's character wantonly attacked ; and he will cheerfully correct unintended errors.

* Vide Rennel's Memoirs.

THE MAHOMEDAN CONQUESTS IN INDIA.

.....

Ganges, near Benares, Sept. 1797.

AMIDST all that boast of Asiatic science and literature; and those lofty claims in favour of Braminical knowledge that have lately been advanced, there are perhaps no nations more ignorant of their own origin and history than the Hindoos and Chinese. Although we have had access to the Sanscreek records at Benares, for several years, and some persons are translating them, no history of the country has been found which is the composition of a native. From the time of Alexander till the Mahomedan conquest, not even the materials of history have been produced from Hindoo records. Mahomed Ferishta, a musselman, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, compiled a history of Hindostan from Persian authors; a translation of which, by Colonel Dow, has long been in possession of the public.

THE

THE manners of a people are to be gathered from allusions in their poetry ; and this is perhaps the chief advantage that science will derive from the ancient records of this country. The Mahabaret, which is now translating *, is a very ancient historical poem, in which the truth of facts is probably still more distorted by exaggeration, than, in Homer, you find the rape of Helen, and the siege of Troy. A flowery poet, or a still more bombastic and loose historian, seems to be the utmost that Asiatic genius can produce : a vigorous intellect, matured judgment, and precision in style, are the growth of colder latitudes †.

ALL we learn, even from the Persian Ferishta, is that Hindostan was at first divided into a great number of separate kingdoms ; and afterwards so feebly united under the Mahomedan emperors, that they made but small resistance either to the first invaders of the country, or to its subsequent conquerors. Each province, attached to its viceroy, who was almost independent of the emperor, fell an easy prey to the incursions of Tamerlane, Baber, Humaioon, and Nadir Shah. The Ayeen Acbery of Abul Fazel, is confined to a statistical history of the empire of Delhi,

* By Mr Wilkins, a gentleman possessed of much knowledge of the languages of India, who has already published an episode of this work, entitled the Bhagrat Geeta.

† Vid. Major Rennel's Mem. p. 43.

Delhi, during the reign of Acber; upon the other kingdoms he seldom touches, and their internal transactions are involved in impenetrable obscurity.

ABOUT the year 1000 of our æra, Mahomed penetrated into Hindostan; and after twelve successive invasions, in which he was more or less opposed by the native princes, he finally established his empire. His vengeance and bigotry seemed more gratified by the massacres of the Hindoos, and the destruction of their temples, than his ambition was foothed by the acquisition of new territory, or subjects. The murders he committed against the defenceless priests, and the numerous votaries of superstition who officiated at the temples, afforded this monster the highest delight. “Nothing,” says the judicious Major Rennel, “offends our feelings more, than the progress of destruction urged by religious zeal: as it allows men to suppose themselves agents of the Divinity; thereby removing those checks which interfere with the perpetration of ordinary villany, and thus makes conscience a party when it was meant to be a judge *.”

THIS picture, however shocking, is too exact a representation of the conduct of most conquerors of Hindostan of the Mahomedan race. During eight dynasties of kings, who reigned over this country for

* Introduction to Mem. p. 46.

a period of 700 years, the most ferocious bigotry and rapine characterised their efforts in acquiring or recovering the different provinces of this peninsula ; and had not the fervor of Mahomedan zeal somewhat abated towards the later period of their power, the whole scene of their conquests must have remained a solitary desert. In 1265, within twenty-five miles of Delhi, the seat of government, an hundred thousand of the Mewatti tribe were put to the sword, as a punishment for their incursions. The internal government of Hindostan must have been in a dreadful state, when such vindictive measures were pursued in the vicinity of the capital. Indeed, rebellious measures, and barbarous conquests, make up the history of this fine country, which nature seemed to have destined to be the paradise of the world.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

AMIDST these depredations, Benares, the great seat of Braminical learning, was plundered in 1184 : and from this time the purity of the Sanscreek language must have gradually decayed, till it at last ceased to be a living tongue, being nowhere spoken in Hindostan. It probably enters into the vernacular language, and makes a part of that mixture of which it is composed, as the Celtic, Saxon, and Latin do in the English. When conquests have been long maintained, and the conquerors numerous, similar changes are produced in the language of every country. The Roman language, as well as the Sanscreek, has ceased to be spoken in all the nations that were subject to that empire.

THIS city, which gives its name to a considerable province, is still the great seat of learning, and is held in veneration all over India : Nothing, however, can more fully demonstrate the circumscribed state of Asiatic knowledge and learning, than the small number who study the Sanscreek language, and enable themselves to read their sacred or scientific books. Very few, even of the highest class of Brahmins have made this attainment—not the thousandth part of the community ; whereas in Europe, almost all the youth of any rank are instructed in the languages of Athens and of Rome from their earliest years ; by their means a considerable mass of knowledge reaches even the body of the people. But the incursions of the Moguls were far oftener renewed ; and were more awfully destructive than those of the Goths and Vandals who overturned the Roman empire, and destroyed the monuments of taste and science that distinguished Europe. Regular government was gradually established, and learning revived with new lustre in that quarter of the world ; while Hindostan remains in the same gloom of ignorance as in the turbulent periods of the Mahomedan conquests.

IN the course of a few years, it will be found that a proportionably greater number of Europeans will study the learned language of Hindostan, than of the natives themselves. From the active curiosity and diligence of the former, much is to be expected ; while

while little can be hoped from the supine indolence, and listless character of the latter.

ABOUT the beginning of the sixteenth century, during the reign of Bellofi, the Portuguese reached India by the Cape of Good Hope. But so deeply was the empire involved in confusion, that they were allowed to make conquests of some of the petty states bordering on the coast, whose viceroys had become independent without even attracting the notice of the court of Delhi.

IT was not till an hundred years after that period that the British were heard of there, when in 1615 Sir Thomas Row was sent ambassador to the Emperor Jehanguire. During the lapse of a century, the Portuguese had made such considerable acquisitions on the coast, as to attract the notice of the court : and Ferishta, the historian, mentions, “ that by the negligence of the king’s governors several districts of Guzarat were in the hands of the *Idolators of Europe**.”

ABOUT a century afterwards, the Mogul empire seemed to have reached the summit of its grandeur ; from which it suddenly relapsed into debility and utter ruin. During the reign of Aurungzebe, who died in 1707, the empire extended almost over the whole

* Vid. Col. Dow’s Hist. of Hindostan.

whole peninsula ; and its annual revenue, where money is four times the value that it is in Europe, amounted to the sum of 32,000,000l. sterling, according to Major Rennel ; but the Ayeen Achery states it at thirty-six millions in the time of Acber.

So vast an empire could not be held together by a weak and unenergetic government : and the mighty sceptre of Aurungzebe, when grasped by the feebler hands of his sons, was found too unwieldy for their management. His death was regarded as the signal of hostility by Mauzum and Azem, the two eldest, who marched, the former from Cabul, and the latter from the Deccan, to dispute, in its center, the possession of an empire too large for the management of one person. Two armies, each consisting of 300,000 men, decided the contest by a battle which cost Azem his life ; and conferred the whole empire on his more fortunate brother, who assumed the title of Bahadar Shah.

His four sons disputed the throne with the same violence that their father had done ; till the power and resources of the empire were so far reduced, as to enable the Sieks, an obscure people from the eastern mountains, to set up Feroksere in the room of Jehander Shah, the last of them. So degraded was the house of Timor, that in the space of eleven years after the death of Aurungzebe, as many princes had been raised to the throne, and successively murdered

dered or deposed. The royal authority thus prostituted, became contemptible ; and the governors of provinces prepared to throw off their dependence on the head of the empire who had become unable to overawe his servants.

THE Nizam, viceroy of the Deccan, and Aliverdi Khan, Subah of Bengal, threw off the yoke ; while the Mahrattas, and Rohillas established independent states in the heart of the empire. The province of Oude was seized by Siefdar Jung, grandfather to the present Nabob Azoph Doulah. Nothing now remained to the Imperial House, except a small territory round Delhi ; when in 1749 the last royal army was defeated by the Rohillas, whose independence was now fully established.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE prince, in whose time this final overthrow of the Mogul power was effected, was Achmed Shah ; from this period, though the title be regularly assumed by the lineal heir of the empire, it is merely nominal. So powerful is the effect of custom among Asiatics, that the name and person of the emperor have been regarded as of consequence to the different powers who have since contended for territory in Hindostan. The veneration of the people for their ancient monarchs has been so great, as to oblige the princes to obtain grants, sanctioned by the emperor's name, to cover their usurpations from the eyes of at least the people throughout

India: and through that extensive territory, which composed the Mogul Empire, the coin of each state is universally struck in the name of an Emperor, whose power they have long ceased to acknowledge.



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

REMARKS

REMARKS ON THE STATEMENT GIVEN BY THE ABBE
RAYNAL OF THE BRITISH CONQUESTS IN BENGAL.

• • • • •

Calcutta, March 1796.

THE celebrated battle of Plassey, which was gained by a small army, consisting, it is said, only of two thousand natives, and nine hundred Europeans, gave the princes of India such an awful impression of British discipline and valour, that it has continued ever since to operate decisively against them at every succeeding engagement.

THOSE who entertain doubts of the truth of Grecian histories, and of the accounts of the Patan and Mogul conquests, from the enormous disproportion of numbers, between the contending armies, may find a clear elucidation of them in many of the engagements in their own times, where the number of the victors was still more disproportioned to that of the vanquished armies. A detachment of French

troops

troops effected revolutions in the Deccan, while their number was, perhaps, not a tenth part of the number of Alexander. The British, in two campaigns, made a complete conquest of Bengal, Bahar, and Oude, with a still more diminutive force. In all these instances, the first advantages were gained by Europeans alone, which were improved by levies in the conquered countries ; and Alexander, who set out with only thirty-five thousand, returned towards Europe with a hundred and twenty thousand men.

AFTER being thus firmly established on the Ganges, the British power was engaged in contests in the Deccan, far more arduous in their nature, and for a while attended with less splendid advantages. There it had to contend with European armies, in a more difficult country, and with native troops whose tactics had been improved by superior discipline : over these obstacles too, however, it has finally been triumphant ; and has annihilated the empire of the Myforian kings, though defended successively by Hyder Ally and Tippoo, two sovereigns of greater military skill, and animated with a more inveterate hostility, than had ever disputed the field against Europeans in the East.

THE account given by the Abbé Raynal of these conquests, and settlements, is more ample and detailed, than that of any other writer. The changes introduced by time, have rendered his descriptions in some

some parts, inapplicable to the present state of the country : in other passages they were often originally inaccurate, from the impossibility of any single person being able to collect so great a mass of authentic particulars. What is still more to be regretted, from his want of personal and local knowledge of the manners of the inhabitants, admittance has sometimes been given to accounts altogether incredible by persons who have visited India.

THE eloquent exaggerations of this ingenious historian have universally been perused ; always to the entertainment, and frequently to the instruction of his reader.

ONE manifest advantage he possessed over a native of Britain ; he could describe the conduct of its servants in India without fear or partiality. His reflections upon this topic are unbiased, and may therefore be justly regarded as the most valuable part of his work ; for this reason I have ventured to give his account of the manner in which we obtained the sovereignty of Bengal, and of the rich province of Behar, from which I now write.

FROM an affectation, however, of impartiality, and of getting the better of European prejudices, the French writers represent the natives of every foreign country as being in a state of comparative perfection and happiness. In their religious and moral duties, they are always on the side of reason : and in every quarrel,

quarrel, or partial contest, they are sure to be on the side of justice. Much of this affectation disgraces the writings of Rousseau as well as of the Abbé Raynal.

“ A pernicious custom,” says he, “ had for some time prevailed in these countries : the governors of all the European settlements took upon them to grant an asylum to such of the natives as were afraid of oppression or punishment. As they received very considerable sums for their protection, they overlooked the danger to which the interests of their principals were exposed by this proceeding. One of the chief officers of Bengal, apprised of this resource, took refuge among the English at Calcutta to avoid the punishment due to his treachery. He was taken under their protection. ^{Sirra Gandhi National} The Subah, justly irritated, put himself at the head of his army, attacked the place ; and took it. He put the garrison into a close dungeon, where they were suffocated in the space of twelve hours. Twenty-three only remained alive. These wretched people offered large sums to the keeper of their prison to prevail upon him to get their deplorable situation represented to the prince. Their cries and lamentations were sufficient information to the people, who were touched with compassion ; but no one would venture to address the despotic monarch upon the subject. The expiring English were told, that he was asleep ; there was not, perhaps, a single person in Bengal who thought that the tyrant’s slumbers should be interrupted for

one moment ; even to preserve the lives of one hundred and fifty unfortunate men !

" ADMIRAL Watson, who was just arrived in India with his squadron, and Colonel Clive, who had distinguished himself so remarkably in the war of the Carnatic, did not delay to avenge the cause of their country. They got together the English who had been dispersed, and were flying from place to place : They went up the Ganges in the month of December 1756, retook Calcutta, and made themselves masters of several other places ; and obtained a complete victory over the Subah.

" SUCH a rapid and extensive success, becomes in a manner inconceivable, when we consider, that it was only with a body of five hundred men, that the English were to stand against the whole force of Bengal. But if their superiority was partly owing to their better discipline, and to other evident advantages which Europeans have in battle over the Indian powers, the ambition of eastern chiefs, the avarice of their ministers, and the nature of a government whose only springs are fear and present interest, were of still more advantage to them : they had sufficient experience to avail themselves of these several circumstances in their first, as well as in every succeeding enterprize. The Subah was detested by all his own people, as tyrants generally are ; the principal officers sold their interest to the English : he was betrayed at the head of his army, the greatest part of which

which refused to engage ; and he himself fell into the hands of the English, who caused him to be strangled in prison.

“ THEY disposed of the Subahship in favour of Jaffier Alli Khan, the ringleader of the conspiracy ; who ceded to the Company some provinces, with a grant of every privilege, exemption and favour, to which they could have any pretension. But soon growing weary of the yoke he had imposed on himself, he was secretly looking out for means to get rid of it. His designs were discovered, and he was confined in the center of his own capital.

“ COSSIM-ALLI Khan, his nephew, was proclaimed in his stead : he had purchased that usurpation with an immense sum of money ; but he did not long enjoy it. Impatient of the yoke, as his predecessor had been, he gave some tokens of his disposition, and refused to submit to the laws which the Company had imposed upon him. Upon this the war broke out again : The Jaffier Alli Khan, whom the English kept in confinement, was again proclaimed Subah of Bengal. They marched against Cossim-Alli Khan. His General Officers were corrupted : he was betrayed, and entirely defeated : too happy, that whilst he lost his dignity, he still possessed the vast treasures he had amassed.

“ NOTWITHSTANDING this revolution, Cossim-Alli did not drop his hopes of vengeance. Full of resent-

resentment, and loaded with treasure, he set out for the Nabob of Benares, chief vizier in the Mogul's empire. He and all the neighbouring princes re-united in opposition to the common enemy, who threatened them all equally. But now the contest remained no longer between them and a handful of Europeans just arrived from the coast of Coromandel; they were to engage with the whole strength of Bengal, of which the English were masters. Elated with their successes, they did not wait to be attacked; they set out directly, and made head against so formidable league, marching with all the confidence Clive could inspire, a leader whose name seemed to be the pledge of conquest. Clive, however, did not care to hazard any thing. Part of the campaign was spent in negociation; but in time the treasures which the English had drawn from Bengal served to ensure them new conquests. The heads of the Indian army were corrupted; and when the Nabob of Benares was desirous of coming to action, he was obliged to fly with his men, without ever being able to engage. By this victory, the country of Benares fell into the hands of the English: and it seemed as if nothing could hinder them from annexing that sovereignty to the province of Bengal."

By these or similar methods, the English have obtained their territory in India; and other nations have acquired theirs by means perhaps still less defensible. In the eye of reason, however, there appears but little ground for those ~~opprobrious~~ terms

D



of abuse with which this lively author has loaded their conduct. In fact, there cannot be adduced a single argument against seizing the territory of the native princes, who were themselves usurpers, which may not be urged against interfering in any manner, or trading with India in general.

WHEREVER mankind have transactions, there will arise quarrels and disputes ; and among nations who quarrel, the weaker party must ever suffer. In every quarter of the world, as well as Asia, every nation, distinguished among its neighbours by superior bravery, knowledge, and industry, has invariably increased its power and enlarged its dominion. Superior talents operate upon the resources of nations and their possessions in the same manner as they do in the case of individuals. Philosophers may harangue : but the industrious and enterprising always have, and in the nature of things ever must acquire an ascendant over the dissolute and poor.

SUCH is the unavoidable consequence of the intercourse of a warlike and enterprising people with nations inferior in arts and arms : If the subject be examined by the rules of morality, perhaps the conduct of Europeans may find a still stronger vindication. According to the above account, the conduct of the native princes has been in the highest degree cruel and tyrannical. The Subah of Bengal, who murdered the English, was detested by all his subjects, and dreaded to such a degree that he durst not be approached

approached on the most urgent calls of humanity. The nobles who hated, betrayed him ; and the picture is applicable to almost every native prince in India. The rules of morality, therefore, if applied to this subject, would impose it as a duty, on every nation who had the power, to vindicate the injuries of mankind, by deposing them from their abused authority.

This relief to the sufferings of mankind could not be viewed as an injury even to the princes themselves ; for they are in general usurpers of their power. In Europe, where hereditary succession is established, the imagination conceives a sort of right in the successor to the prospects which he has been educated to entertain ; he compasses them without violence. In Asia almost every succession is an usurpation. The deceased sovereign bequeaths his people to an adopted heir ; perhaps the child of his menial slave ; and the discontented nobles take the field, and place upon the throne one of their own number, who has no other right than that conferred by the sword. The English, on the contrary, have placed several of the princes whose territories they have acquired, in opulent and splendid circumstances, of which hardly even their own folly can deprive them. And these rich pensioners they have continued from one generation to another, even in despite of their own demerits.

THE late Nabob of Oude left his ample dominions to a child, born to his meanest servant, whose indifference for his people, and extravagance and folly can only be equalled by the meanness of his former condition. His dominions must therefore be governed as they too long have been, by a despotism and wantonness of cruelty more destructive than that of Nero. His territories border upon those of the India Company ; and their limits are every where discernible by the poverty and desolation which they display. The English nation has had a powerful ascendancy over this country for nearly half a century : by them it has been conquered, as well as protected from foreign enemies ; while its princes have preserved their revenue without feeling dependence. A purer code of morality would have taught them, that to suffer crimes you can prevent, is to be necessary in committing them ; that they are in some degree blameable for the wretched internal management of so vast a territory ; that as it has been in their power, so it was their duty to make this prince a pensioner *, and his people happy. They have oftener incurred the guilt of hypocrisy, in the precautions they have adopted to screen their usurpations, than discovered temerity in seizing power which seemed thrown into their hands.

ORIGIN

* What right have we to do this ? We have a right to resume a gift upon the abusing it ; or, if improperly given, whether it has been abused or not.

ORIGIN AND PRESENT STATE OF THE MAHARATTA
EMPIRE.

.....

Near Buxar, Nov. 1796.

In every narrative of India affairs, the Mahrattas are mentioned as one of the most considerable powers which have arisen on the ruins of the Mogul Empire.

THIS nation derives its name from Mahrat, a province in the Deccan *, which is, at present, under the name of Baglana, forms the most central part of the Mahratta dominions. Sevajee is regarded as the founder of this empire; he had obtained a distinguished rank in the army of the King of Visiapour, and the distractions of that monarchy soon afforded him an opportunity of assuming independent power.

His

* Vid. Ferishta's Hist. Hindostan.

His conquests were so rapid in the adjoining provinces, that before the accession of Aurungzebe to the throne, he had already become formidable to the Mogul Empire. The Roman State had not a more hardy or warlike people for its founders than the Mahrattas ; for many of the conquests of Sevajee were made in the face of Aurungzebe when he was at the summit of his power. The confusions which followed upon the death of that Emperor, and the dissentions among his sons, allowed the Mahrattas to extend their conquests with a rapidity peculiar to this part of Asia. Bred in the school of war, and preserved by their rugged and barren mountains from falling into that listless effeminacy which characterized the inhabitants of India, the Mahrattas were able to contend with Aurungzebe himself ; and Sahojee, the prince who succeeded the founder of the nation, had before his death extended his dominions from the western shore of the peninsula to Orissa on the eastern ; and from Agra, on the north, to the Carnatic, on the south ; while almost every part of Hindostan and Bengal itself had been plundered by his armies. These conquests were made in the same manner as those of this nation have ever been : an enterprising chief, by holding up to his followers a prospect of plunder, soon collects an army ; and the weakness and distractions of his neighbours afford him an opportunity of realising his promises.

IN 1718 the Mahrattas were so powerful, that they were enabled to enforce the payment of a tribute

bute from the Emperor Nadir Shah : this imposition is in the language of Hindostan denominated a chout, and though it varied in particular districts, amounted generally to one fourth of the annual revenue. This shameful contribution was exacted from the province of Bengal in 1742, when they overran that province with 80,000 cavalry, whose depredations and cruelties are still remembered with horror by the natives. For two successive years they plundered this rich territory, nor did they quit it till they exhausted its stores, and carried off an immense booty, particularly from the Jaggut Seets, the most eminent bankers in India.

THE fortunes of an empire of such recent formation and rapid growth, were destined soon to fall ; for it contained the seeds of its own destruction. In fact, the combination of the Mahratta chiefs exhibits the feudal constitution in its loosest form. It is a voluntary combination of plunderers, possessing no principle of permanent union or improvement ; and the rise of the Mahratta power may with greater propriety be termed the dissolution of all government, and the establishment of anarchy, than the foundation of regular empire. They are the Swiss of India, ever ready to enter for hire into every scheme of plunder suggested by an ambitious chief.

DURING the reign of Ram Raja, the discordant fabric of the Mahratta government, was divided by the two ministers of that prince, who treated him with

with the same perfidy his ancestor had done the king of Visiapotur. Bajirow, the Peshwah, or minister, assumed the government of the western provinces at Poonah; while the Bukshi, or commander in chief, usurped the eastern districts, and established his government at Nagpore, in Berar. Without any principle of mutual co-operation in making either peace or war, these chiefs continued at the head of their respective dominions.

BAJIROW, the peshwah of Poonah, conducted his administration with a vigour suited to the boldness with which he had usurped his power. He not only took from the Portuguese the islands of Bombay and Salfette, but pushed his conquests in the Panjab as far as the Indus. There, however, they gave umbrage to Abdalla, king of Candahar, a prince with whom they were hitherto unacquainted, and before whom their sudden greatness seemed destined only to have made their downfall the more conspicuous. For some time this aspiring nation had been engaged in every scene of war and politics throughout the whole of Hindostan. This prosperity of their affairs, with the vast territories of which they were in possession, inspired them with the idea of banishing for ever the Mahomedan government from India. On their part, therefore, they collected all the Hindoo powers into a confederacy, while the Mahomedan princes ranged themselves under the banners of Abdalla. Sujah Dowlah, and the Rohilla chiefs were his associates, opposed to the Jatts and Mahrattas.

SHAH Allum was invited to the throne of Delhi by Abdalla ; and the fate of the Mahomedan princes hastened to its decision, which was effected by the celebrated battle of Panniput. Never since the fatal contest between the sons of Allumguire, had Hindostan beheld such numerous armies in the field, or a combat maintained with such obstinate valour. On the side of Abdalla and the Mahomedans there were 150,000 combatants ; on that of the Mahrattas 200,000 men. The deeds of valour performed, and the carnage of both armies were incredible ; but fortune declared in favour of Abdalla. The number of the Mahratta princes taken was immense, and the rout of their army so complete, that they have ever since laid aside all thoughts of universal empire in Hindostan, and their power has continued to decline.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

BALLAJEE, who suffered this signal defeat from the army of Abdalla, soon died, and was succeeded, in their turns, by Maderow, and his son Narrain ; the latter being murdered by Ragoba, his uncle, left the Poonah government in a state of great distraction. The widow of Narrain produced a son who was acknowledged heir ; and the infamous Ragoba, deposed by his subjects, unfortunately drew in the government of Bombay to espouse his cause, by offering advantageous grants to the Company. The war that ensued terminated disgracefully for both parties ; for Ragoba was surrendered to his enemies, and the

Bombay army, after a convention by no means creditable to themselves, agreed to that settlement.

THE administration of the Poonah * government, during a long minority, was conducted by a junto of chiefs whose jealousies and quarrels have frequently brought the state to the verge of civil war; a condition in which it cannot prove formidable to its neighbours.

IT is not probable Hindostan will soon suffer from the conquests of either of the Mahratta states; the Eastern has no resources, and the Western must be feeble from dissensions, till some chief of superior talents unite it into one monarchy *. The measures lately pursued by Scindia, seemed to lead to independent power over the Poonah state. His troops are disciplined by Europeans, and a large body of them, till very lately, was commanded by an officer who had been in the British service. If by their efforts Scindia, or his son Dowlat Row, establishes a new empire in the north and west, the western Mahratta government will be overthrown, and a power established in the vicinity of Oude, more formidable to the British interests than any they have perhaps ever beheld in Hindostan †.

THE

* Purseram Bow, one of the Mahratta chiefs, co-operated with our army in the late war.

† Vide Major Rennel's Mem. Introd.

THE provinces of Agra and Delhi, once so famous for their population and wealth, are at present in the most wretched state. During half a century they have been the seat of uninterrupted devastation ; the lands are nearly laid waste, and the miserable rayuts dare not provide any thing beyond immediate subsistence, from too well founded an apprehension that they would draw upon themselves the cruelties of some licentious chief whose trade is pillage, and whose support is the spoils of his miserable neighbours.

THIS description is but too applicable to the whole Mahratta empire, which at present consists of nearly one half of the whole peninsula of India : and which with the territory belonging to the Seiks, and the English, constitute the only independent power now remaining in this country.

THE Seiks, as well as the Mahrattas, are a recent power which has gradually risen upon the downfall of the Mogul government. This nation consists of a vast number of aristocratical chiefs equally loose and disorderly with the Mahrattas ; their religious principles might form a bond of union in case of any general change threatening their sect. They have in a great measure apostatised from the Hindoo system, and have made great approaches to Deism, and a purer system of natural religion. They receive profelytes and make converts ; and possess a decided advantage over the adherents of the ancient faith in

pre-

precluding themselves from no animal food except the Ox. They may be regarded as the reformed in India, and though the rules of their founder Nanuck have considerable hold over them, they would not perhaps prove so inaccessible to the arguments of missionaries as the followers of Brahma. The extensive country of the Panjab, is wholly in their possession, and forms a wide and untried field, which in some future period may signalize the labours of European missionaries.



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

OF

OF THE EXTENT, POLICE, &c. OF CALCUTTA.

.....

Calcutta, March 1796.

AMONG the first objects which attracts the notice of a stranger on his arrival in Bengal, is the elegance and beauty of Calcutta, the capital of our dominions in the East. The Company's botanic gardens, the elegant villas of its servants, the strong and regular garrison of Fort William, and the spires of the town, announce your approach to a capital, though not above fifty years standing, that would be deemed considerable in any part of the world.

THE activity and enterprize of the English is perhaps no where better displayed, than in the rapid enlargement of this town. In the memory of persons still living here, the European houses were mean, and comparatively few in number. Those of the natives are, in general, still paltry huts; but as prospects

spects of gain, or at least of employment, are always opening in the vicinity of European society; the number of their dwellings has increased in a still greater proportion than that of Europeans. From the number of houses rated for the payment of taxes in the assessor's books, the native inhabitants of Calcutta cannot fall much short of half a million. They amount to this number estimating four persons to each house; an estimate certainly moderate, if you consider the number of children and women around each hut. The Hindoos not only all marry, but enter into that state at a very early period of life, which renders their marriages uncommonly prolific: this circumstance has rendered barrenness and celibacy disgraceful in either sex, but particularly in the female. A young woman, who has not been betrothed in her infancy; or who, from any sinister accident, has not procured a husband, brings much solicitude and disgrace upon the family.

THIS natural source of population has always been seconded by the British government in Calcutta, which has afforded an uniform protection to the lives and property of the inhabitants. The police of the city is chiefly committed to a superintendant of police, and several inferior justices of the peace, with certain stated salaries: before them all petty delinquencies are tried; and smaller disturbances punished. Tannahs, or guard-houses, are erected in the different divisions of the town: and the peace is maintained by a few companies of native soldiers who

who patrol the streets, and prevent disturbance from quarrels, robbery, or theft. Offences of a higher nature, whether committed by Europeans or natives, are cognizable by the supreme court of judicature, which about twenty-five years ago was substituted in place of the Mayor's court, with more extensive jurisdiction, and superior authority.

THE powers of this court extend not only to the Company's territories in this part of India, but also to every case civil or criminal that may occur upon the sea between the Coromandel and Malacca coasts. The jurisdiction of this court does not extend to the upper stations : In these, however, all the European settlers come under an engagement to be amenable to its authority.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE policy of this establishment has been much controverted by the civil and military servants on the Bengal establishment ; and it still seems to be regarded as an unpopular measure. The objections, however, urged against it, as far as I have been able to weigh them, are highly to its honour, and that of its projectors. It is contended that a very considerable discretionary power over the natives, ought to be left in the hands of Europeans, to preserve subordination and obedience. A greater degree of insolence, and a more independent spirit, it is said, is daily gaining ground among that class of men : that they are litigious to a proverb ; and on every occasion put themselves on that footing of equality with

Euro-

Europeans, which they find from experience to be countenanced by the supreme court. They foresee in its continuance, and in the establishment of similar jurisdictions at Bombay and Madras, the total emancipation of the British subjects in India.

THESE charges, and these fears, proceed rather from the misconduct of individuals than their patriotism ; or the rigour of the supreme court. The dissipation of Europeans here is far more conspicuous than the insolence of the natives. Both the military and civil servants are too often in the habit of incurring debt, sometimes by borrowing money from the people of colour ; but oftener by want of punctuality in the payment of wages and accounts. In every case a native is a rigid creditor ; and is gratified, rather than hurt, by seeing himself in a situation in which he can command the personal liberty of an European by imprisonment. But the man who demands the payment of a just debt may be rigid, but is not insolent. An honest man has nothing to fear from such demands ; to him they will always appear more reasonable, than that every person who has the facility to part with his money, or want his wages, should contribute to debauchery, or suffer for the extravagance and folly of another.

FOR-

* Since the above was written, a jurisdiction bill, conferring similar powers to that for Calcutta, has been projected for the settlements of Bombay and Madras.

FORMERLY it sometimes happened that a peace officer in the execution of his duty, has been seized in the cantonments, and insulted in the execution of his duty, at the instigation of officers, or by their personal violence. These facts are reported by themselves with an air of exultation, which clearly demonstrates their inclination, and a wish that they could again be repeated. Even at present, there are combinations well known to the bailiffs, which renders the execution of personal diligence a very dangerous part of their duty. But such objections against the supreme court, are its highest panegyric ; because they are of the same nature with the objections which every thief or robber has to a gibbet.

THE insolence of the natives, and that independent spirit which endangers the British power in India, wise men have not been able to discover ; or they have deemed past experience a better guide to its treatment, than the capricious exercise of discretionary power. The peculations of collectors, and the exactions of officers in detached commands, have produced the only serious discontents which the British government has ever yet experienced. And had the sources of them, or the principal characters concerned, been more immediately under the eye of the supreme court, it is probable that they never would have existed.

HAD the supreme court of Calcutta, or the general police of that capital been established on bad prin-

ciples, their pernicious effects would have appeared long since, within the immediate sphere of their operation. There, however, they are happily as invisible as their supposed cause. Perhaps no city in Europe has increased more rapidly than Calcutta within the last thirty years. Ships belonging to every nation are seen in its harbour. Trade, and every mercantile speculation, has been carried on with a boldness which appears never to have been checked by any judicial iniquity.

GREATER property than is common in Britain, has been accumulated even by some of the natives, and possessed with equal security with that of the richest subjects in England. The safety with which the property of European families is entrusted to the native servants, is indeed highly to their honour. Fifty or sixty, and more, perhaps, in some families, sleep during the night in the compound, or in the passages and verandahs of the house, while every door is open: and you hear of much fewer burglaries and thefts, than are committed in London, after all that the precautions of bolts, watchmen, and constables have been able to effect. Were a house, with an equal number of servants, kept equally accessible in any town of England, it would in all probability be robbed as frequently as it contained any thing that could be carried away. And were these subjects possessed of the same degree of wealth as some natives in Calcutta, there is no country in Europe where they could be more secure. In some, it is not

rash

rash to affirm, that they would have long since been convicted of incivism, or some imaginary crime, in order to conceal the real guilt—that of being rich.

THE Ayeen Achery is entirely silent about Calcutta, which is full proof of its being wholly inconsiderable in the time of A^cb^er. The settlement of a factory here was so late as 1690, by Job Charnock. It must have remained a trading factory till some time after the battle of Plassey in 1757. To have increased in forty years in so unhealthy a spot to its present population of five hundred thousand souls, implies a degree of prosperity, amidst all the irregularities of an infant settlement, that is unparalleled in any other quarter of the world.

Indira Gandhi National
Museum Library

DURING the rapid increase of this town, diseases were fatal to thousands, and particularly, according to the testimony of Dr Lind, among such as had lately arrived from Europe. Hamilton gives of his own knowledge an instance of four hundred burials in six months, at a period when the whole English, resident there, did not exceed twelve hundred. Wherever the British settle, the natives crowd around them for protection and employment : their experience has assured them of both ; and by this they have been guided, in the midst of loud clamours, from Europe, against the cruelty, oppression, and rapacity of their rulers.

MARITIME TRADE OF CALCUTTA.

• • • • •

Calcutta, Dec. 1797.

THE merchants and agents of this capital are by no means confined to transactions with their constituents employed in different branches of the service ; they engage largely in foreign commerce to every part of note either in Asia or Europe. In some houses, the extent of their dealings has been estimated at two crores of rupees annually* : If upon such an immense sum they cleared only the common interest of the country, their gains must prove very ample. But this estimate of their gross concerns is probably exaggerated ; and the nature of the commodities renders mercantile enterprises much more hazardous than they are in Europe.

No

* Above two millions sterling.

No mercantile house has accumulated sums equal to those fortunes acquired by many individuals in the service. The charges of clerks, freight, insurance, with the innumerable items of godown, and house rent, must deeply affect the profits arising from every concern not uncommonly lucrative.

THE extent of the private trade of Calcutta cannot be estimated justly, either from the number or the burden of the ships belonging to that port. Till lately there were only sixty that properly belonged to the British merchants here, and their burden was about twenty-seven thousand tons. But it is well known that their concern in foreign ships is great: the Dutch, Danish, and French settlements in the river afford an opportunity for indirect trade to any extent, of which it is believed they fully avail themselves.

THE Hon. Company affords considerable employment to the country-built ships, independent of the merchants. It possesses a marine establishment, under the direction of a Board constituted for that purpose. During war, cruizers against the enemy are frequently employed; as well as transports, and store-ships for its own troops.

THESE transactions fall under the immediate direction of the Marine Board, consisting of five members, a number of subordinate officers, and clerks. It superintends also the pilot service, a most important

portant branch of the marine establishment in a river of such dangerous navigation as the Hoogly. The great quantity of sand and mud that is washed down this branch of the Ganges during the rains, occasions a continual fluctuation in the size and position of the sand banks, by which its opening is infested. Constant attention to this circumstance is indispensable, in order to place the different buoys so as they shall not mislead the mariner.

FROM the perishable and expensive nature of shipping in this climate, freight must be high : but a circumstance which must be borne by all, seems but slightly to affect any : and commerce appears as adventurous here, as in any part of the world.

THE freight of boats in the inland trade upon the river, is far from being low ; owing to the length of time necessary to perform a moderate voyage upon that winding stream. The larger boats upon the Ganges carry from three hundred to six hundred mauns ; and their hire per month, amounts to twenty, thirty, or sixty rupees, according to their different sizes.

BUDGERROWS, for the accommodation of gentlemen, and their families, are to be had of all sizes from eight to twenty-four oars ; the rate of hire for the first, is sixty rupees per month ; for the largest, two hundred and thirty. This sum includes the pay of the boatmen ; a class of men the most useful, laborious,

brious, and contented in Bengal. The pinnace is another description of travelling boat, still more expensive than the budgerow. It has superior accommodation, and from its resembling the structure of European craft, both in the hull and rigging, it is better fitted for encountering a gale in the great river.

BESIDES the high rate of freight charged on the inland, and maritime trade, the merchants in Calcutta pay a considerable commission on the purchase of goods by their agents: this upon most articles is five per cent.; but as they are more frequently purchasers for others than themselves, this sum will be oftener received than paid.

THE masters of the country-built ships, or the supercargoes, are the immediate agents by which the trade of this part of the world is conducted. They are the most enterprising body of men; and in general better informed than those of the same profession in Europe. Many of them have made independent fortunes; and what is still more to their praise, enjoy them in a decent and creditable manner. The fastidious ideas regarding rank, which formerly prevailed in this capital, went nearly to the exclusion of this useful class of men from the society of our imaginary grandees; a loss more than compensated by their diligent attention to their own concerns; which has raised many of these men to stations

tions in Britain which few of their contemners have been able to attain.

WITH the common Malays, and a mixture of Chinese, and Bengalee seamen, who never become very expert and intelligent in their profession, it is astonishing with what security the country ship-masters perform voyages in these dangerous seas. These vessels are termed Donies ; their enterprises at sea are chiefly to be ascribed to the example of Europeans : before their appearance the Hindoos were hardly known as navigators. There are six different assurance companies in Calcutta ; who cover the property of individuals from the risks of the sea, perhaps at as low a rate of insurance as it can be done in Europe.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE state of navigation, as practised by the natives, like most of their other arts, is far from being in a perfect state. The mariners compass, the greatest improvement in the science, was, and still remains in a very imperfect state over every part of India. Their astronomical instruments are, as far as the practice of sailors is concerned, in a state equally contemptible. In a European ship you may sometimes meet with their barks at sea in the utmost uncertainty of both latitude and longitude. Their instruments are supposed, by some very competent judges, to be borrowed from those of Europeans, and

and are certainly but awkward imitations of their originals *.

OF the ships which I have mentioned belonging to the port of Calcutta, there is not a single one commanded by a native. Some low person of European extract, but removed perhaps by many generations, is frequently preferred to the command even of those paltry ships which venture into the open sea. Of a maritime force hardly any nation in the East has formed any idea. There are, indeed, some proahs and private ships fitted out for piracy, who fight, and massacre the unarmed crews of merchantmen with all the inveteracy and cruelty of savages. These enterprises, such as they are, constitute nearly the whole of Oriental attainments in naval war.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE internal navigation is conducted by the natives to a greater extent, and with a greater degree of success. The different streams of the Ganges intersect the country in a manner so obviously convenient for transporting commodities, that it is probable that the Hindoos have carried on this navigation from the earliest period of their civilization. I will therefore give a short sketch of this noble river as an instrument of internal commerce.

THE source of the Ganges long remained in as much uncertainty as that of the Nile. It was left to

G

the

* Vide Asiatic Researches.

the present age to make the discovery ; when the Chinese Emperor Camhi sent persons to explore it, though at the distance of 2,500 miles from his capital. It issues from the opposite ridge of the same mountains with the Barrampooter, and directs its course in a contrary progress, till the distance of 1200 miles intervenes between rivers that are again to approach and water the same plain.

So completely are the various branches of these rivers diffused over the flat country, that there is hardly any part of the large province of Bengal above twenty-five miles distant from a navigable river. The wood, salt, and provisions of many millions of people are conveyed along these channels by 30,000 boatmen, the most laborious and hardy race in India. All these are independent of the transport of the mercantile commodities to be shipped for Europe, which may amount to two millions annually.

THE Barrampooter, though larger than the Ganges, affords less assistance to commerce ; for it travels east through rugged defiles and vallies, seldom approaching the habitations of man. In a military view, the Ganges is equally commodious as in that in which we have considered it. A communication is afforded by it between the different stations for the conveyance of troops and warlike stores. Thus it supersedes the necessity of forming magazines, and is more commodious than the military roads of the

Romans, or the carrying places of North America, which not only obstruct the progress of an army, but enable the enemy to determine the place and mode of attack. Major Rennel, from whom these particulars are selected, asserts that the Ganges, though inferior in the length of its course, discharges a greater quantity of water into the ocean, than any river in the world, from the influx of the immense tributary streams which it receives, and from its position within the reach of the periodical rains. Yet the trade carried on in this mighty stream, though it passes through the finest country perhaps in the world, appears but trifling when compared to that of China. The Embassy found 100,000 marines on a single branch of the river Peiho only *, whereas 30,000 are stated as the whole amount of Dandies who ply upon the Ganges, according to Major Rennel. According to the Ayeen, the contribution to government must have exceeded this number, since he declares that four thousand boats were furnished by Bengal alone, and ten dandies to each boat is no extravagant allowance.

THE

* Sir George Staunton's Embassy.

THE DIFFERENT RACES OF INHABITANTS SETTLED IN
CALCUTTA.

* * * * *

Calcutta, March 1797.

THE group of inhabitants that meets your eye in passing along the streets of Calcutta, is a multiform mixture of adventurers of every complexion, and from almost every nation in the world. Even the mercantile part of the community consists of individuals from almost all the countries of Europe and Asia.

THE Armenians are the most respectable, and perhaps the most numerous body of foreign merchants in this capital. They carry on an extensive trade from China, and most of the sea-ports to the eastward, and to the west, as far as the Persian Gulph. Their information from all these different quarters, is deemed the most accurate and minute of any body of men in their profession. They are attentive, regular,

gular, and diligent in business ; and never think of departing from their line, and indulging in dissipation, even after a competency has been acquired. Their houses are, therefore, of old standing, and many of them are possessed of large capitals. As subjects they are perhaps the most peaceable and loyal to be found in any country : as members of society they are polite and inoffensive.

WHEN the convalescence of his Majesty, after a severe indisposition, was publicly notified in Calcutta, a general expression of joy was made by all the inhabitants. But the most conspicuous and brilliant illuminations were displayed by an Armenian merchant : because accompanied by an act of charity.

HIS loyalty did not escape the notice of Lord Cornwallis, who on interrogating him what particular interest he felt in the life of his Britannic Majesty, received this reply : " I have, my Lord, lived under his government for near thirty years ; it has never injured me ; but on the contrary always afforded its protection : and this, with industry on my part, has enabled me to accumulate a very plentiful fortune." This speech is not, perhaps, the most eloquent ; but, I confess, that to me it has conveyed a more advantageous idea of his understanding, than if he had composed volumes of our political sophistry.

WHEN these circumstances were reported to his Majesty by the Governor-General, the Armenian
was

was presented with the miniature of his Sovereign, which he continued to wear till his death; and his son now wears it in honour of his family.

SOME of the more respectable Armenians are commonly invited to the public balls and entertainments given in Calcutta: where they invariably behave with all that decorum and correctness which a knowledge of mankind generally produces. A few priests of their persuasion, are maintained by them, not only in affluence, but in some degree of splendor. In their fondness for show and elegance, the Armenians approach nearer the English than any merchants here: they are, however, more guarded in their expence; for they are seldom seen displaying their equipage till they are fully able to defray its charge.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE Mogul merchants are the next body of strangers, if they still merit that title after so long a residence in this country. They have thirteen different mercantile houses of considerable note, besides many other counting houses of inferior importance. Some individuals among the Moguls are very wealthy; and are only inferior in riches to some of the native Rajahs, Banians, and Shroffs: some of these are more opulent than the first noblemen in England. A million sterling, or even half of that sum *, which several

* Among others are Dadee Nastir Wangee, Ramdoss, and Rajah Nopkissen. Mr John Bristow, a civil servant of the

Several are said to possess, yields a revenue of three times the annual amount of any capital in Britain, from the exorbitant rate of interest at which these people lend their money.

A Hindoo, of whatever fortune, still retains his narrow ideas, and parsimonious habits. His pious contributions, and the expences of his Zenana, are the greatest drains upon his income; in his dress and table there is little devoted either to the purposes of elegance or magnificence. The notches, marriages, and religious festivals, seem to be exceptions from this remark; but these ceremonies are under the direction of the Brahmins; and according to the ideas which these spiritual guides have formed of his wealth, must the otter, rose water, and other perfumes, and sweetmeats be, served in vessels of gold, under a large canopy illuminated with beautiful lustres, to many hundreds of guests of all ranks and denominations. The Hindoo on such occasions, is gratified with the appearance of a large company; and deems himself particularly honoured by the attendance of Europeans.

THOUGH the Notches are intended to do honour to some deity, who presides over the festival; yet they seem of all institutions the least calculated to excite

Company, is the richest subject in his Majesty's dominions; his income is above 200,000l. sterling per annum.

excite religious ideas. Part of the ceremony consists in listening to the music of the singing girls, who drawl out their monotonous ditties with a nonchalance and dullness, which can only be equalled by the sluggish dance, and inanimate gestures with which they are accompanied. Of all entertainments, an Hindostanee Notch is probably the most insipid : they are sometimes accompanied with pantomimical performances of no delicate nature. Yet as such invitations are given from politeness, it is proper that they should be accepted, with at least an appearance of satisfaction.

THE number of Greek merchants in Calcutta is not considerable. They however maintain one clergyman, who performs religious worship according to the rites of that church. He is a very agreeable and well informed man ; a native of one of the islands in the Levant.

PORTUGUEZE houses of agency are, in point of number, next to those of the English. A very considerable number of the descendants of that nation, by native women, reside in Calcutta. No people in Europe seem to have assimilated so closely to the manners of the country. In respectability of character, some of the lower ranks are little superior to themselves ; they seem to have retained with more steadiness the vices than the virtues of either line of their ancestors. By many they are deemed the most despicable class in India ; with every vice of the na-

tion they possess few of their virtues. With a complexion darker than that of the Hindoos, with habits so similar, and with full possession of the language, it is strange that none even of these have been able to make a convert from the Heathen to the Roman Catholic faith. Nothing can more clearly demonstrate the compleat dominion which the Brahmin superstition possesses over the minds of the common people: for there is no denomination of Christians more devoted to the work of conversion than the church of Rome.

THE British merchants in Calcutta are a numerous and respectable order of men. In this place several of them have acquired large fortunes, in the acquisition of which they have displayed those mercantile talents, and that enterprising spirit which distinguishes their character in every part of the world. In Calcutta the peculiar habits of their profession have in no degree encroached on the liberality of their minds, or the elegance of their equipage and tables. They here display an expence and splendor in their manner of living seldom aspired after by the same order of men in any part of the world: and what is greatly to their honour, their acts of charity and munificence to indigent persons have, perhaps, never been equalled by any similar number of men of any rank whatever.

FEW of these gentlemen are engaged in the service, a circumstance here of more consequence than

may be apprehended. The service of the Company has certain ideas of rank and consequence attached to it, which often produces ludicrous effects upon the intercourse of society. All persons in civil and military appointments affect a degree of superiority over such as are not in the service, which is frequently ill supported, either by their talents, birth, or character.

AT the public entertainments, rank was formerly a matter of much greater concern at Calcutta than at St. James's. Here all are grasping at rank and superiority, with an eagerness proportioned to the conscious want of it, and to the obscurity of their former condition. This has brought to the subject so great an interest, and so much perplexity, that even the ingenuity of the ladies, who are commonly most deeply versant in this science, is often unable to unravel it. To hand a lady to table, or to her carriage, is an affair which requires deep cogitation : if it be aspired to by a gentleman whose rank is unequal to the office, instead of paying a compliment, he is guilty of rudeness, and commits an unpardonable offence. When the ladies take the floor to dance, the most perfect acquaintance with all that has ever been written upon heraldry, would not enable you to make a satisfactory arrangement either of the ladies themselves or of their partners. Hardly a meeting, formerly, concluded without laying the foundation of turmoils and grievances, more lasting and more

more important than the magnitude of their cause, in your eyes, will justify.

WHERE all are nearly equal in obscurity, and equally destitute of claim to rank, the arrogance and vanity of individuals has no defined limits to its exactions. Where all pursue the same object by the same path, there must be frequent jostlings and collisions of interest or opinion.

HAPPILY the good sense of the present generation is gradually eradicating those seeds of discord ; which could never have been sown but by persons of little understanding, and limited acquaintance with the world.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

OF

OF THE BANNIANS, AND NATIVE SERVANTS.

• • • • •

Calcutta, March 1799.

AMONG the various classes of the mercantile part of the community, formerly noticed, no mention is made of the Jews. Few of that nation ever settle in India ; and Calcutta is perhaps the only opulent town that is free of them.

THE character of the native merchants is so completely Jewish, that were the most expert of the Israelites to deal with them, it is more than probable that he would be defeated at his own weapons.

THE native Bannians, Sarkars, and writers, carry on the greatest part of the retail trade of Calcutta. They go around hawking commodities, from morning to night ; or searching after cheap purchases. Nothing can exceed their eagerness for money ; and if

if you are not in some measure a judge of the article you are to purchase, you will infallibly be over-reached. Indeed, that low cunning, stratagem, and deceit, which characterizes the money transactions of persons of narrow intellects, applies almost without exception to this class of the Hindoos. For once that an European over-reaches them, he is cheated a thousand times. Whether you employ a *Consumah* or *Sarkar*, to transact business, you must lay your account with imposition ; for although he may boast of belonging to the highest cast of his country, half a rupee will unfortunately often prove greater than the price of his honesty. To over-reach in a bargain infers no discredit among these men : such as are noted for it obtain the appellation of *pucka adme*, men of strong parts.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

It must, however, be acknowledged, that whatever money or goods you intrust to the care of a native servant, will in general be faithfully accounted for. It is in making a bargain with you, or purchasing goods, in your absence, on your own account, that you are so frequently betrayed. The ideas I had formed of the innocence and simplicity of the natives, and of the frauds, peculations, and oppressions which they suffered from the British, I have often had occasion to correct ; as they bore but little resemblance to matter of fact.

WITH all their propensity to cheat, the native shop-keepers generally sell their goods on lower terms than

than you meet with in the European ware-rooms. They are commonly neither of the first fashion, nor quality ; and they are purchased at Vendue, where they are often procured on very moderate terms.

THEIR house rent is another cause of their underselling Europeans. The shops of the natives, though better than their houses, are mean and disagreeable ; and from their situation in the common bazars, are infinitely cheaper than the larger and splendid rooms in which the British merchants expose their wares.

HOUSE rent, and servants wages, are the most expensive parts of the charges of house-keeping in Calcutta. The common articles of provision are much cheaper than in Europe ; but house rent, till lately, has been a very exorbitant charge. Only a few years ago, a house sufficient to accommodate a genteel family, could not be procured under six or eight hundred pounds a year ; many were let at a larger sum. The extent and number of buildings occupied by many of the merchants in Calcutta must prove a considerable item in their expence.

THE number of servants necessary in a private family exceeds all moderation, and I am afraid the belief of an Englishman, who has not visited this country. For some time after my arrival, I lived in a private family, where the servants of all descriptions amounted to an hundred and five. What is more remarkable, they were to a man all necessary. This surely

surely is no small inconvenience to Europeans; but it is an evil for which there is no remedy as long as the superstition of the natives shall deter them from performing service beyond one specific kind of work. The wages varies according to the different stations they occupy; from four rupees per month, to twenty. The average paid to each man in the family, just mentioned, cannot be less than six rupees, which amounts to near seven hundred a year.

THIS added to the house rent, and the incidental charges of a family, will raise its expenditure to three, four, and five thousand rupees a year, according to its number. Nor is this expence to be ascribed to the extravagant ideas imbibed in this country, or to the gratification of vanity, a plant of rank growth in Bengal; but is absolutely incurred by many sober families, who have remained untainted by any of the burdensome and costly follies of fashionable life.

WHERE these are followed, they constitute, in this warm climate, the most laborious of all pursuits; and cannot be indulged without an expence, double, perhaps treble the amount above stated.

THE extravagant rate of house rent suggested a speculation which has, perhaps, as far as possible reduced that charge. Purchasing ground, and house-building became for a while a favourite scheme of proprietors in Calcutta; but while the number of Europeans remains comparatively few, this speculation

tion may easily be carried too far. The number of houses is at present fully adequate to the accommodation of the people; yet building goes forward with a rapidity which must soon prove its own check.

BRICKS, mortar, and wood, are by no means scarce in Bengal; yet the money sunk in building a house, is always great in proportion to its size and accommodation. The number of natives employed, and the slowness of their operations, is necessarily attended with this consequence. Besides, houses in India are always a perishable commodity, and in constant need of repairs. This may partly be owing to the heavy rains, and storms of wind; but it is chiefly to be ascribed to the destructive intrusions of the white ants *. These animals make their way in great numbers into every place where there is moisture, and form habitations in the heart of the hardest beams and planks. So destructive are they in their operations, that every beam in a house may be completely destroyed, while outwardly it may appear perfectly sound.

FROM these circumstances, and the great interest of money, the rent of a house must in Bengal bear double the proportion to the capital sunk in building it, that is requisite in Europe, to render house-build-

ing

* *Termites fatales.*

ing a profitable speculation. Hence rent in Calcutta still continues high, and will probably remain so.

ONE comfortable circumstance in the structure of the houses of Europeans, is their exemption from the accident of fire. Only a small portion of wood enters into the materials; for the partition walls, as well as the flat roofs are chiefly constructed of brick and mortar. This last article, under the denomination of *Chunam*, the natives have brought to great perfection.

AMIDST that security from fire, enjoyed by European families, the native inhabitants are subject to dreadful alarms and danger from that element. The great bulk of their huts are constructed of a kind of basket work, made of split bamboos or reeds. This slender and combustible fabric, the Hindoo neatly covers in a light thatched roof; and in this humble tenement, he, his wife, and numerous children reside, with a degree of cleanliness and comfort, which would gratify your humanity, as completely as it mocks the toils of the ambitious.

THESE mansions of contentment are regularly threatened, or destroyed by fire every dry season. On travelling through the town you may sometimes see whole streets smoking in ashes, and thousands of inhabitants busy in carrying off their little moveable property. You are not, however, to suppose that this scene proves equally calamitous as similar ones

in Europe. Here property is small, and in general easily secured : the habitations are slender, and therefore easily rebuilt. For one or two rupees, the Hindoo is reinstated in a dwelling with equal comfort after, as before an accident, which generally reduces an European family to beggary during the rest of their days. The inconvenience of sleeping in the open air for a few nights, from choice or necessity, has to the Hindoo become so familiar, that it finds no place in the list of his misfortunes. Thus does the stream of human happiness diffuse itself in a more equable tenor than we often imagine : and the poet's observation is as completely verified in its figurative and moral, as it is in its natural application ;

*Celsi graviori casu,
Decidunt turres.*

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

The great are exposed to many real, and more imaginary evils ; the wealthy offer a broad mark to adversity ; while many of the rudest strokes of fortune either reach not the humble dwellings of the poor, or make on them but a slight and temporary impression.

In proof of what is here asserted, I have observed in the provinces of Oude, several hundred cottages demolished by the swelling of the Ganges and Jumna, and, though on the spot, never heard a complaint ; nor indeed beheld a scene of real misery. In the beginning of September 1798, the Ganges broke

broke over its bank, and destroyed several hundreds of mud-houses. This unavoidably happens as often as even stagnated water reaches the walls, as from the nature of this substance they crumble down, and the roof falls in. The inhabitants remain so long as with safety they dare, and when that cannot longer be done, they resort to the nearest height and construct a temporary shed of the old roof and materials of their former dwelling.

I have seen them sitting smoking their hookers, in a house three feet covered with water; the fire-wood of the family was piled up on the floor, and upon the top of it the members sat without any visible suffering or concern. The River is a munificent god; they repose in its mercy;—possibly their faith and piety would be gratified by being carried down in its stream.

ESTABLISHMENTS FOR EDUCATION IN CALCUTTA.

.....

Calcutta, Jan. 1797.

THE maintenance and education of the children belonging to Europeans in India, have on account of their increasing number, become objects of great importance. Nearly half a century has already elapsed since the power of the British arms has been established in Bengal; and the influx of European inhabitants has ever since kept pace with the increase of power, and the prospect of acquiring wealth. In the service of the Company, and in the prosecution of private adventures, opportunity has been offered to many of accumulating fortunes; but the country has been the grave of many more.

EUROPEANS in India, whether they live to become rich, or die poor, from their own dissolute habits, and the unhappy frailty of the Mahomedan women,

gene-

generally leave a numerous progeny behind them. In every case where the parent is poor, the maintenance of his children becomes, whether they live or die, a public charge upon the community.

DID not the exercise of their benevolence in some measure cover a multitude of faults, the Europeans of India must have long since been condemned to behold scenes of the utmost distress in the situation of orphans, and the children of the poor ; precluded from any rank and employment in European society, and abandoned by the natives, they seemed to be the most destitute of all beings.

IN this light they were viewed by several persons, who have done honour to themselves and their country, by establishing schools for the maintenance and education of the orphan children of the military servants of the Company. Two institutions have been formed for this purpose ; one for the children of officers, and the other for those of private soldiers. Each is provided with teachers of both sexes ; qualified to instruct the children in such branches of knowledge and industry, as seem fitted for their rank and prospects in society. The fund for the support of these institutions, is supplied by a fixed contribution raised from the military, and by the donations of such persons as wish to forward the aims of benevolence.

THE children of such as have died, or of such as are evidently poor, are only admitted gratuitously into this school; but any officer may, for a reasonable sum, have his children educated there: and it is the most eligible place in India; for during a period of twenty years, the management and superintendance of this seminary of education have been as faithful and as diligent as its institution was benevolent. About six or seven hundred children are maintained and educated by this useful charity. The only thing wanting to complete its purpose seems to be suitable employment for the youth of both sexes, after they have finished their education. There has not hitherto been in India any middle class of society, between the Europeans and natives, and of consequence few employments open for them to occupy.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THIS want of employment for country-born children has already been severely felt; and is every day becoming more urgent from the increase of their number. Besides the two institutions already mentioned, there are seven or eight others for the education of boys; and nearly an equal number for girls. If, in the orphan schools, all the interest of the heads of the army and of the managers, is unable to procure employment for the youth educated there, the difficulty is much greater in private seminaries, where this can only devolve upon individuals. For the settlement of their pupils in useful professions, neither parents nor masters have yet been able to devise any adequate means.

ACCORDINGLY almost all the schools in Calcutta for either sex, are continuing to increase in the number of pupils, and in the difficulty of providing for them. This difficulty is increased by the manner in which female education is conducted in Calcutta. From a partiality as unaccountable as it is ill founded, the girls are splendidly educated in boarding-schools, where they are taught to dance with ease, and to dress with some degree of elegance, but much more affectation. These accomplishments, superficial as they are, contain nearly the whole amount of their attainments at the boarding-school.

ON their public nights, when they dance and see company, none of the boys of their own rank, by birth and fortune, are admitted. These are the only persons, with whom nature seems to have intended they should unite, and live happily; but the prejudices of Calcutta counteract her purpose, and exclude them from their society as beings of an inferior class. Young officers in the army, or civil servants of the Company, are alone deemed fit companions; and from the contemptible ideas they in general entertain of the whole race of country-born women, they are the most dangerous companions with whom they can associate.

BUT female vanity bids defiance to all these considerations; and many young men of rank, and high expectations, have been unable to resist its artifices, aided by the stratagems of the mistress of the school.

Mar-

Marriages of this kind have not been unfrequent; but they are always unhappy. With regard to the parties themselves, they are either excluded from society, or admitted with such caution and ceremonious reserve, as must continually put them in mind of their degradation. The consequence of such matches to connections in Europe are equally distressing. Parents, in particular, imagine their children lost or thrown away by such marriages: they have brought many a grey head with sorrow to the grave.

Few females of colour, in proportion to their number, can be disposed of in this manner. To educate them, therefore, expressly with such views, entirely precludes every hope of uniting them with their equals, or their own class. It never fails to produce a train of ideas and expectations in the female breast, of which the disappointment, is misery; and their completion, ruin.

No person of reflection can enter the numerous boarding-schools in Calcutta, without feeling the most melancholy forebodings regarding the fate of so many young persons. To behold so many of the rising generation immured within their walls with hardly any probability of making a safe or honourable retreat, is certainly distressing: because it compels your imagination to anticipate the sad alternative before many of them, that of living in a state of want and disappointment, or of subsisting by means fatal to happiness and reputation.

BESIDES these foundations, there are some others of inferior note, equally laudable, established, and maintained by the munificence of the inhabitants of Calcutta. A free-school which educates near two hundred children, under the management of the vestry, is, in part, supported by voluntary contributions only. Two lacs of rupees were originally devoted to the education of the children of the poor. The interest of that sum continues still to be applied for that purpose: another school, however, nearly equally numerous has been added to this, upon a fund raised merely by casual benefactions. An oratorio has of late been performed annually to aid its funds, which promises a considerable supply of revenue.

To these institutions, so creditable to the humanity and benevolence of the inhabitants of Calcutta, the native hospital must be added. This institution is also supported by voluntary contribution; and was contrived for the relief of such natives, as from accidents or disease, might want medical aid. Thousands, in so populous a place, must be in want of assistance, while they are too indigent to obtain it on any other footing than the charity of Europeans. And it is highly to the honour of our countrymen, that they have devised and supported a scheme of relief for disease and indigence, which, as far as I can learn, has never been suggested by the humanity of their native monarchs. There were hospitals for dogs,

cats, lions, and several other animals, but none for men.

THE medical gentlemen in Calcutta are frequently applied to in private by the natives, for advice in their ailments, and if really in pain, the dictates of nature prevail against the bigotry of superstition; for they generally take their medicines, in spite of the prohibitions of their religion.

THE confidence which the natives, in every trying occasion, put in the superior skill of Europeans, amounts almost of itself to a confutation of those persons, who, without any means of knowledge, are constantly holding up their attainments as superior to every thing known in Europe.

A very expensive establishment for the education of the junior servants of the Company, has lately been instituted; but as it is for *business*, and not *education*, that these gentlemen are sent to India, it is difficult to foresee any benefit that will ever result from this measure. Instruction in the native dialects is in general all that is necessary to qualify them for the exercise of their duty, and this they have hitherto received from Moonshees at the spare hours that are not employed in their different vocations. The practice of their professional duty of itself greatly assisted them in acquiring the language of the natives; while it prevented the loss of several years, and a great

great expence, which is incurred at this dissolute seminary.

INDIA has not hitherto improved the assiduity of Europeans in the pursuit of literature: and there are at present in that country but few men adequately qualified to fill a professional chair. Young men, therefore, from Europe must deem their time ill spent if compelled to hear lectures from professors but indifferently qualified to be teachers of a parish school.

THE conquest of the Mysore was somehow connected with this institution, an event which it was destined to commemorate: yet brilliant as the execution of that enterprize certainly was, it was concerted without any regard to time, or supplies of provisions, a circumstance which had nearly frustrated the bravery of our army *.

THE

* Since writing the above, the Court of Directors have abolished this College; the most expensive erection which vanity or folly had ever made upon their treasury.

THE EFFECTS OF A HOT CLIMATE ON EUROPEANS.

.....

Calcutta, Dec. 1796.

THE climate of almost every intra-tropical region is unfavourable to European constitutions. Those flat countries where moisture is combined with heat, are unexceptionably more injurious to health than such as are dry. Hence the climate of Batavia has long proved one of the most fatally pernicious ever visited by Europeans.

CALCUTTA was at first deemed hardly less destructive than Batavia. Its situation surrounded by a flat and marshy country, was productive of the same effects. The vicinity has since been cleared considerably of trees and jungle; and some of the more offensive marshes have been drained; much, however, still must be done, before it can merit the character of a healthy town.

EURO-

EUROPEANS are now however much better acquainted with the means of counteracting the effects of a bad climate than formerly. Regularity of living, and temperance, are much more prevalent among the present inhabitants, than the first adventurers. It was not uncommon for his acquaintances, when a friend had laid in a fresh stock of wines, to meet in his house at dinner, in order to give their judgment of its quality ; and on these occasions, perhaps, the whole chest of claret was consumed at one sederunt. The consequences were often so fatal, that the next meeting of this social crew was not unfrequently to witness the funeral of one of their companions.

THE perfection to which the medical art has arrived by longer experience, has also had a happy effect in preserving the lives of many Europeans. The diseases of the country are now well understood by almost every practitioner : the practice is simple and decisive. Fevers, and the whole train of bilious complaints, are more efficaciously treated, or at least yield more certainly to their prescriptions than any set of diseases equally malignant do in Britain. Were fever as dangerous here as in Europe, its frequency would prove fatal almost to every inhabitant before residing twelve months in the country.

WHATEVER be the exciting cause of bile ; whether accelerated circulation from the heat of the climate, or relaxation from the same cause, its excess is in

in general the *origo mali*. It produces fever, dysentery, with a long train of nervous and paralytic disorders; every stage of which has a peculiar and appropriate treatment, which is soon acquired, and pretty uniformly followed by every practitioner: and there is perhaps no part of the world where the profession can boast of an equal number of cures; or at least of relief so uniformly following its prescriptions.

AFTER all, however, the climate of India proves a severe trial to every European constitution; many fall a sacrifice to its first attacks; many more linger on in a state of increasing debility, and painful disease, which reduces them to a state more resembling ghosts than men; the remainder who for years continue to combat its influence, finding that they also are at last to be worsted in the conflict, are glad to retreat to Europe, there to eke out, or to husband the remains of life.

A sallow and livid complexion is so universal in Bengal, that when you behold a face of the roseate hue, you can pronounce that its owner is newly arrived, nearly with as much certainty as if you heard that part of his history from his own mouth. Even in the ordinary health of persons not supposed to be materially injured by the climate, they are capable of little exertion or fatigue: in the hot season of hardly any at all. It is not uncommon to find, at that period, the whole officers of a battalion, except one or

two, incapable of doing duty ; and this without extraordinary or alarming complaint.

THE fair sex are almost equally liable with the men to suffer by the climate. Their regularity is often more uniform, and their exposure to the weather less frequent, yet there is hardly a single female complexion in Bengal that retains the bloom of health. Beauty in every country is a fading flower ; here it is almost ephemeral ; for you seldom behold it a single season without suffering much depredation, perhaps a total decay.

FORMERLY female adventurers in India were few ; but highly successful. Emboldened by this success, and countenanced by their example, such numbers have embarked in this speculation as threaten to defeat its purpose. The irregularities of our Government, which formerly afforded an opportunity to some of rapidly accumulating wealth, and enabled them to marry, are now done away. Few, in comparison, now find themselves in circumstances that invite to matrimonial engagements ; hence a number of unfortunate females are seen wandering for years in a single and unconnected state. Some are annually forced to abandon the forlorn hope ; and return to Europe, after the loss of beauty, too frequently their only property. It is greatly to be wished that the Cape of Good Hope may as effectually revive the spirits of these ill-fated adventurers, as, from its name, we must believe it did those of its first discoverers.

verers. If in future times it realize their almost vanished prospects, it must be regarded as a valuable station ; for it will prevent a part of the species from suffering, on their return, a mortification the more peculiarly grievous, since it commands no man's pity.

PERHAPS there are few even of those who find every reasonable hope that they had formed of India gratified, that do not inwardly regret having abandoned their native land : the candid, on summing up the whole account, seem to acknowledge that the measure has neither added to the number of real enjoyments, nor increased their virtue : they find when the scene of life draws to a close, and the curtain is ready to drop, that it might probably have met with a less chequered, but equally happy termination, by a less troublesome and circuitous route.

IF this prove the case with such as meet with employments, or lucrative appointments in this country ; those unfortunate young men who risk so long a voyage without any specific views, or particular profession, are in a situation much to be commiserated. Under mental uneasiness, and the pain of disappointment, diseases in a warm climate are all aggravated, and more certainly fatal. Thus has many a promising youth fallen a sacrifice to unsubstantial hopes, and disappointed ambition : many a useful and enterprising subject has been lost to the State from the false notions entertained at home with regard to the opu-

opulence of India; and the golden dreams which ignorance has indulged regarding its trade.

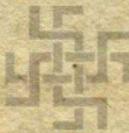
THE great military achievements which have been performed, as well as the fortunes that have been made by some individuals in this country, make a powerful impression on the minds of young men. Long before they have finished their education at school, their imaginations are affected by the mania of going to India, and of their acting their part in all the brave and romantic adventures of a Coot, a Lawrence, or a Clive. The spirit of adventure is kept remarkably active in Scotland, where all receive some education, and where the eyes of the community are so often called to behold successful examples of those who have finished their career of Asiatic enterprise.

Centre for the Arts

WITHOUT attempting to eradicate this useful bias in the minds of our youth, it is much to be wished that it were oftener guided by men of experience; for without being attached to some department of the service, or educated to some profession, there is hardly any rational hope of success in India. Here all the inferior departments of clerks, and overseers, are necessarily filled by natives, and it is by those gradations that in Europe young men rise to opulence in the commercial world. Distant as this country is from the seat of Government, and strictly as all outlets to it are guarded, there are perhaps ten Europeans in every department, for one that can

obtain profitable employment; and of the great object in migration, that of making a fortune, there are more than an hundred to one unsuccessful in the pursuit.

OF late the commercial prosperity and wealth of Britain has so much increased, that in future the wealthy part of our community will not be found among those who have returned from abroad, but among that portion who have remained in their native country.



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

OP

OF THE RANK AND CONDITION OF THE DIFFERENT
CLASSES.

.....

Calcutta, Dec. 1797.

THE state of society and of government in every country of Europe, threw the inhabitants into a similar situation with regard to rank: there the whole community consisted, during the feudal periods, of licentious chieftains who overawed the sovereign, and kept the people in a state of slavery. The priesthood was the only order whose rights and rank were respected, in these ages of superstition and anarchy.

EVERY circumstance seems to prove that the Hindoos were, in a remote period, nearly in the same state. The different districts, originally governed by independent princes, were gradually brought to submit to an emperor whose dominions were circumscribed by the natural boundaries of the country. In this situation of affairs there were several kings or great

great rajahs, who were tributary to the emperor ; and other inferior rajahs who paid tribute to their respective superiors, and who, when summoned into the field, attended them with a number of men proportioned to the extent of their possessions *.

THE far greater part of the lands of Hindostan were held by this military tenure ; but as in Europe, so here, there were others appropriated to the church, and to charitable purposes : we find too, in many parts, certain commons attached to different villages, which were cultivated by the joint labour of the inhabitants, or pastured by their cattle in common.

THE ryots, or actual cultivators of the soil, are still in the same situation here which they were among the ancient Romans, *adscripti glebae*, a sort of appendage to the land, and sold along with it. This was the case in England as late as the time of King John, when it was stipulated by one of the provisions of the boasted Magna Charta, that on restoring to a ward his estates after his minority, they should be delivered *sine vasto hominum vel rerum* *.

* Vid. Sketches of the manners and customs of the Hindoos.

* Though the natives are not positively sold with an estate, they must, from the nature of their situation, change masters along with it.

IN this country, the ryots have hardly any secure leases; they were allowed a certain portion of the crop to maintain their families and their cattle; but seem not to have been entrusted with the seed for next season, that being furnished by the proprietor. The proportion of produce allowed the peasant must, according to the foil, have always been very different. The barrenness of the lands, the difficulty of cultivation, and the failure or abundance of a crop, always affect the portion left to the husbandman.

IN countries plentifully supplied with water, the labour of the husbandman is diminished, while his crops are more abundant; but on the coast of Coromandel, where the foil is thin and sandy, and the water scarce, greater exertion is required; and the recompence is much less considerable. From the circumstance of there being no lease strictly adhered to, the condition of the peasant is nearly the same, whatever be the produce of his labour: he is universally poor. His house, clothing, and implements of every kind, frequently do not amount to the value of a pound sterling. Universal poverty and nakedness is the characteristic of nine tenths of all the people, not British subjects, in Hindostan; but you must not conclude that this is accompanied with the same degree of suffering and wretchedness that would be felt in a similar state of indigence in Europe. Their wants are here few: clothing is hardly necessary for eight months of the year: drink is unknown beyond the simple beverage of water; and the simplicity of their

their food enables them to subsist on vegetables, which are plenty, with a small portion of grain. An Hindoo feels himself comfortable on the same fare on which an Englishman would languish and starve.

SUCH are the ranks of the people as far as they seem to be influenced by government; but the prevalence of superstition has moulded their society into a more complex and artificial system. According to its injunctions, the Hindoos are divided into four castes; the Brahmins, the Katry, the Bhyse, and the Sodera. Besides these castes, now well known in Europe, there are a very considerable number which belong to neither, which, in the language of the country, are called Chandalahs, or Pariahs, and consist of those who have been outcasts from all the ranks, on account of their own, or forefathers delinquency; for by the rigid discipline of the Brahmins, sins are visited to greater extent than to the third or fourth generation.

THE sentence of excommunication is here more terrible than death: the person lying under it is deemed polluted, and if touched by another it renders him also unclean, till he has washed, and purified his person and his garments. The person, therefore, is not only excluded from society, but he cannot enter a temple, or be present at any religious ceremony; he is rendered incapable of any office, and the consequences of this terrible doom are supposed to extend to another life.

THE rank of the different castes is not only laid down in the vedahs, or sacred books of the Hindoos, but their duties are prescribed there with some precision. “ The duty of the Brahmins is peace, self-restraint, patience, rectitude, wisdom, and learning. Those of the Katry, or military cast, are bravery, glory, not to flee from the field, rectitude, generosity, and princely conduct. The natural duty of the Bhyse, is to cultivate the land, to tend the cattle, to buy and sell. The natural duty of the Sordera is servitude *.” This sacred volume proceeded from Brimha, one of the three † children of Brahma, the supreme Being. The Sastras and Pouranahs are commentaries upon these, and like the traditions of the Jews and of the Romish church, of very high authority, but not equally holy, nor binding upon conduct.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE Brahmins alone are permitted to read and explain the vedahs ; the other classes would incur inexpiable guilt by inspecting them : the Katry tribe is alone allowed to hear them ; the Pouranahs are deemed sufficiently sacred to be listened to by vulgar ears : even to hear the scriptures read is deemed too great a privilege for the degraded race of Sorderas.

As if these restrictions were insufficient, every profession and art has a distinct rank and station assigned it,

* Vide Bhagvat Geeta.

† The other two are Vishnu and Sheva.

it, from which its professors can never emerge, nor can they change their hereditary employment for any other. Hence there are nearly an hundred * subordinate tribes in the society of natives here, which do not intermarry nor associate except with their own peers. There is in Calcutta, I am told, a native † who is employed in drawing an individual of each class occupied in his professional labour.

THE Brahmins who have entailed these restrictions on the rest of society, are themselves under great restraint with regard to the articles of food. Rice, milk, and ghee with spices, are the most considerable articles of their diet; for they are prohibited from shedding blood, or eating any thing that has had life: milk as coming from the cow is deemed the purest food; and for this class of animals we have had frequent opportunity to witness their veneration.

A similar religious prejudice for the ox obtained among the Egyptians, Phenicians, Athenians, and other nations; perhaps it was originally derived from the East, which appears to have been the great mint of superstition to the rest of the world. There are some even of our own divines, who have attempted to draw an analogy between our theological system

* Vide de la Croze, Hist. du Christ. des Indes.

† Mr Solvins, whose work is nearly completed.

tem and these ancient fables ; an attempt equally fruitless and foolish. What confirmation, for example, or illustration of the doctrine of the Trinity can there be derived from there being three principal Hindu divinities, Brimha, Vishnu, and Sheva ? or because these deities have undergone several incarnations for the instruction and regeneration of mankind, does that give any greater credibility to our system ? yet our zealots * have attempted this, without seeming to be aware of the tendency of their pursuit. To prove that our Faith is similar to, or derived from that of the Hindoos, is, we trust, impossible ; if it were otherwise, the system of both countries would seem to rest upon the same foundation.

THOUGH the Brahmins constitute the highest class from which the priests are taken, yet the whole of that order do not officiate in sacred ceremonies ; the priests among the Jews were indeed of the tribe of Levi, but all the Levites were not priests. The Brahmins, accordingly, who are not in the priesthood, may assume other employments, but are not allowed to engage as menial servants. They become secretaries to persons of high rank, or clerks to bankers and merchants. Some bear arms ; but even in that situation they observe all the restrictions incumbent upon their order, and receive a superior

M

de-

* Vide Morice's Ind. Antiquities.

degree of respect from all the other castes, but not equal to that conferred upon the actual priests.

THOSE in the immediate service of the altar, confine themselves to the performance of religious ceremonies, to study, and to the education of youth. From the great partiality to their cast, which evidently pervades these laws, it is probable that they were drawn up by themselves. They claim a superior rank to princes ; for though a Rajah will receive and taste, with respect, food that has been prepared by a Brahmin, the latter dare not taste any thing that has been touched by the former.

THE same iniquitous distinction of persons, that pervaded the Gothic system of laws, is observable in the Hindoo code : “ If a Brahmin,” says the law, “ commit a crime deserving a capital punishment, the magistrate shall sentence him to perpetual imprisonment. There is no crime so great as that of murdering a Brahmin ; and therefore no magistrate shall ever devise the death of one ; nor cut off any of his limbs. If a Sordera give much and frequent trouble to a Brahmin, the magistrate shall put him to death.” In matters of precedence, and giving place on the road, all are obliged to yield to a Brahmin.

THE next order to this is the Khashtria, or Katry, and upon this cast the functions of royalty are devolved. The authority and the possessions

of Rajahs are, as with princes in Europe, hereditary; descending in the line of legitimate male-primogeniture: but this extends only to the first degree; for in default of a son, the prince may set aside every other relation, and adopt a successor; who, from the period of adoption, obtains the rights and appellation of his son *. The younger branches of a Rajah's family serve in the army, and hold lands by a feudal tenure.

ALL commercial transactions are committed to the Bhyse, or Bannian cast, who sometimes possess individually immense wealth. The Sordera tribe, which is, by far, more numerous than all the rest, comprises the artifans, and labourers of every description. The great desideratum in European society seems to be a proper means of securing happiness and contentment with their lot to the labouring poor. This *chef d' œuvre* of government seems to be secured here by the influence of religion. By this the Sordera is taught to believe that he is placed in this his station by way of trial; or on account of offences committed in a previous state; that by resignation and piety he will enjoy greater happiness in a subsequent life, and in another world.

HENCE

* An instance of this has just happened to the Nabob Vizier of Oude.

HENCE the attachment of a Hindoo to his rank and station is equal to that he has for religion itself. This is frequently displayed by the meanest classes that engage in the European service : a seapoy, or a bearer is as obstinately observant of the customs of his order as a Brahmin ; while in Europe the same class imitate their betters.

ECCLE-

ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENT.

Calcutta, Dec. 1798.

THE persecuting spirit, and religious bigotry, which characterised the first European adventurers in America, have tarnished the lustre of all their achievements, and branded their conduct with a degree of infamy, which their acknowledged bravery and military talents have never been able to obliterate. Happily for the inhabitants of Asia, that fervor of zeal, which devoured every thing that opposed it, like a consuming fire, had either subsided, or been tempered by knowledge, before any nation of Europe had obtained considerable territorial possessions in this populous country. Had the superstitious Hindoos fallen under the military teaching of any European nation at that intolerant period, it is hard to conjecture to what length persecution might have been carried. The attachment of the natives to their fu-

per-

perstitious rites, is excessive; and can only be surpassed by the obstinate bigotry with which every European of that age enforced the tenets of his faith upon the ill-fated unbeliever.

EQUAL havock and destruction would in all probability have marked the progress of the Portuguese arms, as that of the Spaniards in the new world; for the former, as well as the latter people, were actuated by a zeal incompatible with all the forbearance of opposite opinions. The lapse of two centuries has brought about a change in the sentiments of Europeans, so complete, as to approach the opposite extreme of indifference: a state which is, perhaps, neither more rational, nor less dangerous to public virtue, than religious bigotry.

AN excessive ardour in the accumulation of wealth has succeeded to this religious fervor, and has frequently displayed itself equally powerful in destroying sentiments of virtue and humanity, as the most intemperate zeal in disseminating fanatical opinions. The mercantile jealousy of the Dutch at Amboyna, shone forth in colours as disgraceful to humanity as Spanish bigotry in Peru.

WHEN young persons from Europe, of little information, and still less reflection, observe the numberless puerile, and debasing ceremonies of the Hindoo worship; restrained, in this instance, by no prejudice of education, they see the impositions of priesthood,

craft, and the devout submission of ignorance, in the full extent of their enormity ; and pity or despise that credulity, which can be imposed upon, by artifices so gross, or which can embrace opinions so absurd. As religious establishments must in every country, as far as they have been constituted and upheld by man, be tarnished with similar imperfections, they begin to fancy they discover much imposture in all ; and to imagine that all stand on one basis, upon which the crafty have raised a superstructure to overawe the timid, or infnare the weak. Full of such notions, which they find countenanced in society under the appellation of liberality of sentiment, they fancy that to be lax in principle is to become liberal in mind ; and that to ridicule religion is a sufficient title to make them be ranked with the wise.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

BUT when the restraints of religion are overthrown, the ties of virtue and duty are also soon broken. In remote districts, where persons of this description have sometimes been invested with command, there is no doubt that the looseness of their conduct has too nearly corresponded with these principles. In such instances, the poor natives have found that their property, however small, has been unable to overbalance European virtue ; and that their sufferings however afflictive to themselves, have not been able to awaken in the minds of their oppressors an apprehension of future retribution.

HAPPILY for the honour of the British name, examples of cruelty and rapine exercised against the defenceless natives, are far more rare than the unfounded clamours of the multitude at home have given out. Happily too, for the natives themselves, they are becoming daily more uncommon ; and if the controul and energy of our government, shall become equal to its integrity, they will never be repeated.

THAT the Court of Directors of the India Company were not aware of the necessity of supporting the interests of religion and virtue among their servants, in a country whose distance deprives them, in a great measure, of controul over them, it would be rash to affirm. It is, however, certain that neither the number nor choice of the clergymen they have appointed in Bengal, has been in proportion to the number of their servants, nor the importance of the object in view ; whether you regard keeping up the appearance of religion among Europeans, or disseminating its principles among the natives.

ON this establishment their full complement of chaplains is only nine * ; their actual number seldom

ex-

* There are a few others at Madras and Bombay ; but altogether there is too small a number to keep up the restraints of decency and religion in a society constituted like that of the Europeans in India.

exceeds five or six. Two of these being always fixed at the Presidency, all the other European stations, dispersed over a tract of country much more extensive than Great Britain, are committed to the charge of the other three or four individuals. In consequence of this, the presence of a clergyman is seldom seen, or even expected, to solemnize the usual ceremonies of marriages, baptisms, or funerals. Prayers are read sometimes at the stations where a chaplain happens to reside; but I have seldom heard of any sermon delivered, except by his Majesty's chaplains, and those at Calcutta. Hence, it must happen, that many persons have left England at an early age, and resided in India perhaps for twenty or thirty years, without once having heard divine service, till their return *.

India Gandhi National
Library

IT is not, surely, to be wondered at, that religion and moral duties should be forgotten in a country where their utility is never inculcated, nor the necessity even of their appearance enforced. With irreligious principles, irregular conduct is intimately connected. Gaming, debauchery, and all kinds of extravagance in living, are generally in its train. The man whose fortune has been ruined by dissipa-

N

tion,

* Since writing the above, this negligence has been corrected; yet many from indolence, or contempt of the institution of their country, have wilfully neglected the opportunity, when offered, of attending on the offices of religion.

tion, or at a gaming table, is certainly not the most likely to withstand temptation in the execution of his duty. On the contrary, those whose profligate habits have reduced them to distress, have in general been the only persons who have attempted to retrieve their affairs at the expence either of the Company, or of the native inhabitants.

IN the end, therefore, the economy of the Court of Directors in constituting their religious establishment, may appear to be founded on false principles. The whole charge incurred for religious duties, both to the European inhabitants and natives of Bengal, does not amount to a sum nearly equal to the monthly salary paid to some individuals in their service; whose only employment is dissipation, and whose importance to the country can only be estimated by the mischief done by their example.

THE small emolument held out to the clerical profession here, affords, perhaps, another instance in which prudential considerations defeat their own purpose. Men of decent conduct, and respectability of character, cannot be supposed willing, for a trivial salary, to embark for a part of the world so distant as India, where they must bid adieu to all preferment at home: while the service in which they embark offers only present subsistence, but holds out no gradation of rank or emolument. For an appointment in India such men rarely apply: and as often as characters of a contrary description are sent here, they

they invariably do more harm than good. Men who engage in all the fashionable dissipations of the country, are ill calculated to support the dignity of religion among their countrymen, and little likely to withdraw the natives from their errors. The standard of truth will, if committed to such hands, be but feebly upheld, or perhaps altogether disgraced; and, in either case, it will always be accompanied by few followers.



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

PRAC.

PRACTICAL INCONVENIENCES OF THE HINDU
SUPERSTITION.

.....

Calcutta, Dec. 1798.

THAT the superstition of the Hindoos is, in many respects, calculated to promote the ends of society, will not be denied. The rigid temperance, if not abstinence, which all its votaries are bound to observe, certainly preserves them from many irregularities, which too frequently disturb social happiness in Europe; where drunkenness and intemperance are believed to destroy a greater number of inhabitants than the sword. If the health and constitution of many Europeans are injured by these vices, we may fairly pronounce that industry and wealth are impaired in a still higher degree. From the vices of intemperance, however, neither the Hindoos nor Mussulmans are entirely exempted. The former by means of *Bang*, opium, or tobacco, can, and sometimes do encounter all the dangers of intoxication, which

which we experience from the use of fermented liquors. With regard to the latter, the prohibitions of their prophet make comparatively slight impression. The distinction of casts makes no part of the Mahomedan institutions: and hence they are not compelled to observe these with that rigid uniformity which the dreadful sentence of excommunication fails not to enforce upon the followers of Brahma. Intoxication, either with spirits, opium, or tobacco, is by no means uncommon among the Mussulmans all over Hindostan. Among our domestic servants, and in the Company's native regiments, the difference is great and palpable between the Hindoo and Moorman, in point of sobriety. Proud, dissolute, and vindictive, the latter is a much less manageable servant than the former, and upon all occasions more apt to betray his trust. His dissolute habits detain him in poverty, and consequently oblige him to remain in the army, while the Hindoo becomes independent, and may leave it.

THE numerous ablutions enjoined by the Hindoo, are attended with advantages, perhaps, less doubtful than those derived from their abstinence. Almost every individual bathes once, or twice a day, and in a warm climate this must not only brace the limbs, but preserve health by promoting cleanliness.

IN estimating the advantages resulting to society from the prevailing superstition of this country, the two foregoing particulars include almost all that can be

be advanced in its favour. To counterbalance these, upon the other hand, we have to notice afterwards many great obstacles which it opposes to the improvements of husbandry, and the increase of population, by precluding the inhabitants from the use of many important articles of food. The number of festivals and holidays, to be totally consecrated to the performance of its numerous and expensive rites, certainly tends to dissipate the minds of the indolent people, and to withdraw them from those labours from which they derive their support. These shews not only occupy the tradesman's time, which is his revenue, but they must waste the sustenance which he has provided for his family ; by the necessity he lies under of contributing to their expence.

IN the Hindoo almanack, ^{Indira Gandhi National Library, New Delhi} the number of holidays for the year 1797, are no less than ninety-one ; and though some of these are not of great note, yet others claim their sole attention, for three or four days together. This must certainly prove a heavy tax on the industry of any people, but more especially of the improvident Hindoos, who seldom can boast of sufficient foresight to provide against a few days either of sickness or want.

ALL that has been said against the want of industry in Roman Catholic countries may, with double force, be urged against the Hindoos. The most indolent nation in Europe far excels in every exertion,

whe-

whether mental or corporeal, this listless and unambitious race.

THIS last *trait* of their character leads to another powerful obstacle to social and political improvement, arising from the superstition of the natives : the division of the whole society into four great distinct castes or tribes, and a much greater number of inferior classifications, the boundaries of which are insurmountable, even by the purest virtue, or the most conspicuous merit. This not only precludes a man from the profession to which nature or inclination may have bent his talents, but it also in a great measure robs him of every motive of honest ambition to excel in that sphere where his birth has fixed him ; because even then, eminence in his profession can confer no additional rank, and but little distinction.

THE principle of emulation is the grand spring of all industry, and consequently of improvement : in Europe, where its operation is less restrained, it models and arranges the whole structure of society. There the manners of one age differ as remarkably from a succeeding one, as if the people were not the same : one period is warlike ; another commercial ; and a third, is splendid and luxurious, or perhaps learned : in Asia, as the condition of individuals remains unalterable, so does the state of society. The descriptions given of India in the days of Alexander, may be applied to with equal fidelity by the British historian, as they were by the Grecian. The simple

dress

dress of the Hindoo, his rude hut, and his feeble instruments of agriculture, are the same at present as they were two thousand years ago; and if the same causes continue to operate, they must remain for many ages without amendment, and without change.

SOME authors have ascribed the perfection to which the arts have been carried in Bengal to this separation of professions; and the necessity which every family lies under of following the trade of its progenitors. It is here that this distribution of professions early carried the arts to a certain progress considerably beyond what they are found among savage nations, and is the great cause of their remaining in that half perfected state. No art in Hindostan is carried to the same degree of perfection as in Europe, except some articles in which the cheapness of labour gives them an advantage, as in the case of the fine muslins at Dacca. For a long time we only had it in our power to make a direct comparison between Europeans and Asiatics in the art of war: and history testifies how miserably deficient the latter have always proved in enterprises of this nature.

IT is but a few years since the cotton manufactory has been established in Britain, and by the last reports I have perused on this subject, from a committee of the House of Commons, it is set forth, that double the quantity of cotton cloth, which the Company imports from India, is manufactured at home. In a few years hence, it is probable that all the

the manufactured produce of India will bear hardly any proportion to that of Great Britain, and that too in the very article of which the Hindoos have had the exclusive possession for so many ages, and that in the same fabric which they were deemed the only people of sufficient ingenuity to execute.

THE manufactures of Europe, to every man who is unprejudiced, will certainly appear infinitely superior, both in the number and variety of articles, and in the neatness and elegance of their execution, to those even of China. This, at least, is certain, that in proportion to the number of inhabitants, Britain exports more of its manufactured produce than any other part of the world.

IT may be concluded, therefore, that the division of labour, arising from the separate castes, does not perfect manufactures, but impedes their progress, by precluding the choice of professions, and destroying the principle of emulation. But the Hindoo superstition is further hostile to the comfort of society from the number of pilgrimages and rigid penances which, if it does not positively enjoin, it certainly commends. At certain festivals, vast crowds of the natives, from all places of India, resort to Jaugernaut, and other Pagodas of extraordinary sanctity. The distance of these journeys, the expence of support, and the time consumed by them, must prove extremely burdensome. After their arrival, the attendance of such multitudes, and their struggles to

obtain admission, -cost many of the aged and feeble their lives, by being trode to death in the crowd : the fame of superior sanctity is all that these deluded pilgrims carry home. The interested Brahmins, under one pious pretence or another, are sure to deprive them of all the money in their possession.

MANY thousands of people are employed in carrying water from Hurdwar to Juggernaut, for the uses of that temple. It is there supposed to be peculiarly holy, as it issues from what is called the Cow's Mouth. This superstitious notion is the cause of as much lost labour as would long since have converted the largest province of Asia into a garden. The numbers thus employed are immense ; they travel with two flasks of the water slung over the shoulder by means of an elastic piece of Bamboo. The same quantity which employs perhaps fifteen thousand persons, might easily be carried down the Ganges in a few boats annually. Princes and families of distinction have this water carried to them in all parts of Hindostan ; it is drank at feasts, as well as upon religious occasions.

THE fanaticism of some, as if such journeys were not sufficiently tedious and fatiguing, when performed in the usual manner, has devised an extraordinary method of enhancing their merit, by encreasing the difficulty of performing them. Some hundred miles have been lately travelled by a zealous devotee, who prostrated himself, and measured every inch

inch of the ground with his body, as he advanced. Years must have been consumed, by this deluded wretch, in prosecuting this devout imagination, which can only tend to make his life useless, and his example dangerous to society.

THE utmost rigour of discipline, that ecclesiastic power ventured to impose in the darkest ages of papal tyranny in Europe, fall far short of the degrading and painful mortifications of the Asiatic devotee. Some remain for so many years in one posture, that they become incapable of using their limbs : some keep their fists shut till the nails penetrate through the back of the hands : others hold their arms suspended above the head till they become shrivelled and incapable of motion. One of the annual ceremonies of the Hindoo superstition, exhibits thousands all over India swung in a rope, by means of a hook passed through the muscles of the back. Thus the devotee exulting amidst torture, because applauded by the multitude, passes hours suspended by a lofty pole to the height of forty feet ; and is swung round with a rapidity which terrifies and astonishes the European by a just apprehension that the muscles may give way, and dash the infatuated victim to pieces.

THERE is no end to the delusions of superstition, nor any bounds to the cruelties to which it can instigate people the most gentle and timid, with which history has made us acquainted. Some are per-

suaded

suaded to regain their lost rank in society, by precipitating themselves naked from a great height upon spikes and edged weapons. Others pierce their skin with a hot iron ; in short, cruelties too horrid for recital, and too extravagant to obtain belief, are daily provoking your pity or indignation, amidst a people famed for humanity in every part of the world.

ONE part of the religious economy of this people, regarding their conduct towards the sick and dying, cannot be beheld without the most melancholy impressions. When a sick person's life is despaired of, he is carried by his relations to the bank of the river, and there, exposed to the storm, or the intense heat of the sun, he is permitted or rather forced to resign his breath. His mouth, nose, and ears are closely stopped with the mud of the river ; large vessels of water are kept pouring upon him ; and it is amidst the agonies of disease, and the convulsive struggles of suffocation, that the miserable Hindoo bids adieu to his relations, and to his present existence. This is called Gungah jatra ; and when life is gone the corpse is burnt, if the family can pay the expences, and the ashes are thrown into the river.

DURING the months of September and October, the most fatal season of the year to the natives of Bengal, you cannot pass along the river without being annoyed by such scenes of superstition, cruelty, and horror. If the person carried down to the bank die, according to expectation, or rather yield to those

precautions taken to secure his death, the body, together with the cot upon which it lies, is surrounded with dried wood, and thus consumed by the flames. The ashes are then scattered about the place, and bathed with water. This last ceremony performed, the attendants retire to their huts, with an indifference that seems to approach to insensibility.

IN cases of extreme poverty, where the property of the deceased is not sufficient to procure wood, and such cases are common in Bengal, the body is committed entire to the stream immediately after death. Inconveniences attend this practice, of a nature still more serious than the impressions of melancholy and disgust, which unavoidably arise, on beholding human carcases devoured by kifes and vultures, as they float along upon the surface of the water. The banks of the river become putrid and noxious ; their exhalations propagate disease with an alarming rapidity in the neighbourhood of populous towns.

FOR some years past, the city of Moreshadabad, and the adjoining villages of Calcapore, and Cossimbazar, have been threatened with devastation, by the universality of diseases at the season already mentioned. Professional men have imputed this in part to the impurity of the river, and the putridity of its banks, contracted by the deposition of so many human carcases, and impure matters, as could not be carried away by the strength of the stream.

THE EFFECTS OF THIS SYSTEM ON THE KNOWLEDGE
AND VIRTUE OF THE PEOPLE.

• • • • •

Calcutta, Jan. 1798.

THE pernicious consequences resulting from the Hindoo system to morals, have been as yet but partly explained. Of the ceremonies of their religion some are shewy, many absurd, and not a few indecent. Their temples, in some places, are richly endowed, and maintain a numerous body of priests * and women consecrated to their service. The latter are taught to sing and dance at the public festivals, in honour of the gods. The voluptuous indolence in which they are destined to spend their lives, renders them totally useless to society; while the indecency of their gestures, and levity of manners, give room to suspect that they injure it by their example; and that their

* One temple in the Deccan formerly maintained forty thousand; or more than double the number contained in the whole European empire of Great-Britain.

services are oftener devoted to the priests, than the deities to whom they are consecrated. Their temples themselves contain images of creative power, and of fecundity too gross for description. Similar representations are also displayed by their images, that are drawn through the streets, amidst the dancing, noise and acclamations of the multitude. The Ruth Jatra, or riding of the Gods, is at once cruel and indecent; their carriage, of immense height and size, is supported on sixteen wheels, and drawn along by thousands of fanatics, many of whom fall down below its wheels, and are instantly, as they believe, in possession of a blessed immortality. Though it, perhaps, would be wrong to suppose, that such representations convey the same gross and indelicate conceptions to the minds of the natives, that they must do to those of Europeans, there can hardly remain a doubt that they affect the purity of their morals. A Roman would certainly return to mix in society, with no advantage to his morals, after celebrating the orgies of Bacchus, or the impure ceremonies of the Bona Dea: neither can an Hindoo enter his family with any refined notions of continence and self-denial, after beholding the lascivious gestures of the women, and the indecent attitudes of the images he has been worshipping. To affirm this would be to assert, that our minds are neither affected with what we see, nor what we do. The Mussulmen are addicted to every species of indulgence and debauchery, in a remarkable degree; and if the Hindoos are not equally so, it is chiefly to be ascribed to their early
mar-

marriages, and number of their wives, which offers them an opportunity of gratifying or extinguishing their passions as soon as they arise. To their excessive indulgence in certain gratifications, may probably be imputed that early decay, and premature old age so remarkable in both sexes; but more especially in the females. A woman at twenty-five, in this country, commonly displays grey hairs, with all that shrivelled appearance of age and decay, which in Europe seldom overtakes the sex, before they have witnessed the lapse of half a century.

THE Hindoo superstition makes no provision for the instruction of the great body of the people. The vedahs, pouranahs, and other sacred books contain, it is said, a copious system of the most unexceptionable morality: and from the specimens already translated, this must in part be admitted. But the canonical books of the Hindoos, have always been regarded as a bequest too sacred to be committed to vulgar hands. To the far greater part of society they are strictly forbidden, and are doomed to remain, in the most emphatic sense, a *dead letter*.

IN the present condition of the natives of Hindostan, this is a matter of small importance; because a few individuals only of the common people, are taught more than to read and write; and of the number that have made these attainments, hardly any have made sufficient progress to qualify them to derive information from a book. Nothing can equal
the

the ignorance of the great body of the people, on every subject relating to religion, morals or literature. Few of them can explain the genealogy, or attributes ascribed to their deities : they do not understand the meaning of the ceremonies they attend ; and the nature and obligations of their duty, they may obscurely feel, but are wholly incapable to describe *.

THE inconvenience of ignorance, so gross and universal, is too obvious to require elucidation. It renders the mass of the people not only dupes to the artifices of priestcraft, but subjects them to the impositions of every charlatan who pretends to skill in any art or science whatever. The charms, incantations, and exorcisms † that here make a part of the medical art clearly shew, that the grossest impositions, in other matters as well as religion, may be turned to account, among an uninformed multitude.

THE great superiority of the European nations over the Asiatics in arts, arms, and industry, as well as knowledge, arises in a more considerable degree, than what is commonly acknowledged, from the public provision that is made by the former, for the instruction of the great body of the people. The multitude who have few sources of information, derive no small advantage from their stated meetings,

P

for

* The number of deities is thirty-three crore ; this may account for their being but partly known.

† A celebrated Tank near Benares is resorted to by many, from a belief that it cures all such as are possessed with devils.

for religious purposes, where their various duties are explained, and enforced. A sense of his duty and interest, a consciousness of his importance, is claimed by every Briton as a sort of prerogative which he watches with equal jealousy and pride: the Hindoo has hardly any such conceptions; or they give him but small concern. Hence a consciousness of inferiority continually haunts him; he obeys with a promptitude, that seems rather the dictate of nature, than the result of reflection. In most of the manufactures conducted by a European, this disposition of the natives is illustrated every day: while performing the work which they and their ancestors have conducted for ages, they receive the directions of the European superintendant, as if dictated by inspiration; although he may, perhaps, have only the experience of a few months. The diffidence of the sepooy is equally remarkable; and it is, perhaps, the greatest blemish in his professional character. On the day of battle, when led on by his European officer, he is distinguished by steadiness and bravery, but he flies if he behold him fall; though there be greater danger in the retreat than in the battle.

Thus has the ignorance of the great body of the natives of India shaded their character with a diffidence and timidity, which has not only rendered them the slaves of their own monarchs or foreigners in every age, but has degraded them in some measure to an inferior rank among human beings. From this condition which has so often called forth the contempt

tempt of the brave, and the compassion of the wise, you in vain endeavour to raise them, while their intellects are chained down by the multiplied fetters of their degrading superstition.

THE higher orders of the Brahmins, whose duty it is to undertake this work, and who are perhaps alone able to effect it, are the least likely to make any such attempt. While their own minds are comparatively enlightened by a pure system of natural religion, and all those precepts of duty which cultivated reason teaches; they "detain the truth in unrighteousness" and commit the people to be guided by grosser systems of superstition and error. As if warned by the conduct of European nations, that the dissemination of truth would tend to diminish their own importance and wealth, ^{in India & Hindoo Nations} they seem to labour for the preservation of superstition and ignorance with the same anxiety, which, if more honest men, they would discover for its destruction. With an interested foresight they seem to have anticipated the alternative: and have determined to reign among uninformed dependents, rather than associate on more equal terms with respectable men.

HENCE the steady countenance they give in public to doctrines which they surely disbelieve; and hence the gravity with which they preside at ceremonies which they inwardly despise. All that has been alledged by Mr Gibbon against the sincerity of Cæsar or Cicero, when, as priests, they officiated at the absurd

surd formalities of their superstition before the Roman multitude, is less than the truth if applied to the Brahmins. To them, the wild fictions of their theological system appear all equally false; while on the part of the people they are all embraced with the most implicit belief *.

THERE is not in India as in Europe any class of men capable of detecting the encroachments of priestcraft, or of sifting the baser materials by which sometimes it contaminates truth. Here all have at least the grace of faith; none pretend to dispute doctrines incomprehensible from studied obscurity, or unascertainable from their ambiguity and folly. In this country, therefore, there may be a difference in ceremonies, and practical observances; but there are no sectaries from contrariety of opinion †.

Centre for the Arts

THOSE polemical disputes in religion and politics, which in Europe sometimes disturb society; but which always awaken curiosity, and invigorate the powers of intellect, are unheard of in India: the Hindoo shelters himself from such turmoils in a total apathy, or listlessness of thought, more resembling the stillness

* From early prejudice, authority and example, it is possible, that even the learned Brahmins may believe in their system, farther than to a European may seem compatible with its absurdity.

† The inhabitants are divided into two great sects with different external marks, but their opinions are so vague, that those of one person never clash with the tenets of another.

ness of the grave or annihilation itself, than the common efforts of a rational being.

IF I have in any degree been successful in this sketch, I have endeavoured to lay before you, of the effects of superstition upon the morals and condition of this people, you will be able to form an opinion of the small quantity of intellectual furniture with which their minds are stored : should you at the same time recal to your memory the simplicity of their dress, or rather the nakedness of their bodies, you will, no doubt, perceive abundant room for improvement in the moral and religious state of many millions of our fellow subjects in India, as well as for advancing their external circumstances. The learned Dr Robertson has travelled partly over the same ground, but with a different view, and he may have impressed you with different sentiments. The description he has given of the early progress made by the Hindoos is extremely accurate, and guarded in its assertions. If applied to the higher orders of the Brahmins or the princes of Hindostan it is strictly just ; but nothing can be more erroneous than its application to the bulk of the people, whom the foregoing strictures are meant to describe.

THE sciences of India, and all the more liberal arts, are at present, and always have been, confined to the great and learned alone. The moral and theological knowledge possessed by a few in the higher ranks, for many ages, is as completely beyond the reach of the common

common people as if it did not exist : of consequence it must prove of little service in promoting their interests. The same thing may be affirmed of every branch of knowledge : the portion possessed by nineteen of twenty of the whole community, is comparatively nothing. To the power of habit and the influence of custom alone they are consigned for the direction of themselves : reason, inert and feeble as in them it must prove, has little share in what we justly regard as its peculiar province.

IN such circumstances, certainly no people can be more entitled to indulgence towards their weaknesses and errors ; and there is certainly none who have stronger claims upon our sympathy and tendernes. Britons now occupy the places of their native princes, and the blessings of protection, instruction, and encouragement in virtue, which there are too frequently withheld, providence has imposed upon us as a sacred duty to bestow.

THE HINDOO SYSTEM AS IT AFFECTS SOCIAL INTER-
COURSE.

Calcutta, Dec. 1798.

THE separation of mankind into classes so widely distinguished as to admit of hardly any intercourse, or communication, tends manifestly to hurt their interest, by exciting unsocial and discordant passions : envy of their superiors, among the poor ; contempt and aversion, to the lower orders, among the wealthy and great. A Hindoo, of the higher orders, cannot contract an alliance by marriage with any inferior class to his own. The four great divisions of rank known in Europe, are sub-divided into fifty or sixty subordinate distinctions, which, however imperceptible by us, are adhered to by the natives with all the obstinacy of pride, and the antipathy of prejudice.

Two families to us apparently of exactly the same rank, when about to intermarry, often find much difficulty

ficulty in surmounting their mutual prejudices, even where no law interposes its prohibition. The punishment of losing cast which corresponds to excommunication with us, is infinitely more dreadful in its effects than it was in the dark ages in Europe. It no doubt is a strong check upon the conduct : to render it a salutary one it should only be made the punishment of immorality. This, however, is by no means the case: since a Hindoo, of the most abandoned character, may retain his rank, while an honest man by touching impure food, or by some trivial delinquency, will be degraded, and perhaps forfeit all countenance of society. Morality, the offspring of religion, is here separated from it ; and deemed entirely unconnected with a subject of which it constitutes so essential a part.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE parties themselves are betrothed during their infancy, and the business is, without their consent, concluded by the parents with great solemnity. A person versant in their family genealogy, is employed by the parents on both fides ; frequent meetings of the relations are called, when the rank and merits of each family, are fully discussed by these genealogists. After these important preliminaries are adjusted, an elegant feast is provided, and the agreement is finally ratified ; though the parties are allowed no intercourse whatever till the age of puberty. Symptoms of that state no sooner are discovered in the female, than the concluding ceremony and feast, corresponding to what

what the Romans termed the *deductio domum* is observed, and the marriage is completed.

THESE ceremonies can only happen, when the parties are of the same rank : when it is otherwise, an alliance would render a Hindoo, not only detestable to himself, but he and all his posterity would be for ever debarred from all society. To sit down at a meal, with an inferior cast, would be attended with the same serious consequences : so inveterate and insurmountable is this prejudice, that a naked Hindoo of any rank would deem himself execrably polluted were the first monarch * in Europe to approach him, at the time of his eating. While dinner is preparing, and during eating, a small circle is drawn round the company, which an European, if he pafs, infallibly defiles the meal : it is thrown to the dogs, and other viſtuals provided, though a ſingle ana be all the treasure of the family.

IN so far as this ſuperſtitio tends to eſtrange mankind, by creating artificial ſources of mutual averſion and diſgulf ; ſo far certainly does it counteract the real intereſts of ſociety. A true or an uſeful ſyſtem would inculcate humanity and mutual love. So far from inculcating that, there is a wide and impaſſable

Q

diſtance

* I believe all kings are held as purified from their transgressions on mounting the Muſhud Laws of Menu. It is like-
wise a maxim not honoured with reference to Hindoo derivation, that the king can do nothing wrong.

distance between individuals of the same species : it would teach that they are equal, at least in the sight of the great parent of mankind, and that they ought to cherish sentiments suitable to their situation as members of one universal family. The Christian system offers a remarkable and pointed contrast to the doctrine of the Brahmins, in this particular ; and its effects at first, in some degree, correspond : for we are told that “ the multitude of them that believed” were not divided into different classes, that disdained all intercourse and abhorred each other, but “ were of one heart, of one mind, and of one soul.” Let it not be urged that the practical effects of this artificial separation of the Asiatics, are not greatly felt in society, or that a Brahmin or Rajah will as readily supply the wants of the poorer classes as he would those of his own. The fact is otherwise ; the Brahmin considers his order, as, in some measure, a different race of beings ; and imagines that the lower ranks are incapable of the same sensibility to suffering : he regards them as a race whose feelings are deadened by the meanness of their intellect, and therefore not entitled to the same share of compassion.

THAT this is the idea of the princes and civil magistrates throughout India, their own conduct sufficiently evinces : hence the severity of their government, the rigor of their punishments, and their universal indifference to the comfort, and even the lives of their subjects.

THE aversions created among the Hindoos by their superstition, are not confined merely to such as belong to the different castes. It pervades the whole compass of society; and is equally observable in all the different sub-divisions of the same general class. The persons employed by Europeans as bearers, have equal antipathy to the other sets in the same profession as if they held their stations in the opposite extremes of society. The Ooria Balasore bearers will not serve in the company of such as come from Patna. The case is the same with other districts; as often as their inhabitants meet each other, upon the same service, and apparently on the same footing, they do not eat, sleep, or associate together. The consequences of this are obviously inconvenient, both to themselves, and to Europeans.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

SUCH distinctions lead not only to a shyness, and aversion in the intercourse of society; but they are apparently the cause of many quarrels and animosities. The timidity and gentleness of the Hindoo may, in general, prevent his fighting, boxing, or shedding of blood; but it by no means restrains him from scolding and upbraiding his neighbours. In this respect they are the most litigious and quarrelsome of all men. Have two persons a misunderstanding, let them meet in the street, and they will upbraid each other for an hour together with every foul epithet of abuse which their imagination can suggest, or their language supply. A few natives engaged in one of these bickerings display a furious gesticulation;

ticulation ; a volubility of words ; and coarseness of expression ; which leave the eloquence of Billingsgate far behind. Their quarrels do not amount perhaps to a positive breach of the peace ; being generally unaccompanied with violence ; yet, as they are extremely frequent, they are a considerable annoyance to society ; for they add to the asperity of human life ; and strengthen the malevolent passions.

ACCORDINGLY, it is found that private charity is by no means the bright part of a Hindoo's character : religious persons, or those who assume that character, certainly are liberally supplied ; but this must be the offspring of superstition rather than the dictate of humanity. On some particular occasions, such as opening a new Serai, most extensive charities are distributed, to the multitude which is invited there. But this is mere ostentation : neither in its principles nor in its effects does it come up to the rational idea of charity. The necessitous poor are more happily directed for relief to the door of an European, than to their brethren in the faith. Pagodas indeed are raised, Choultries built, and on great occasions thousands are fed by a wealthy native ; but all this may be done in compliance with the interested advice of the Brahmins, or to gratify ostentation : and we ought not to confound what is extorted by the fears of superstition, or what is lavished by vanity, with the charitable benefactions dictated by a sound understanding and a benevolent heart.

ANOTHER circumstance, in which the religious system of this people is prejudicial to industry and moral virtue, and consequently to the happiness of society, is the multitude of ceremonious rites, and trifling observances by which it occupies the mind: thus withdrawing the attention from the necessity of practising rectitude and preserving integrity of heart. In almost every action of his life, the Hindoo is under the immediate influence of his superstition: his prayers are offerings to his gods; his purifications, and ablutions in the river; his dressing and eating his victuals; the objects which he touches; the companions with whom he associates, are to him all intimately and equally connected with religion, and the everlasting welfare of his soul. If there is any part of his conduct with which his religious ideas have no concern, it is his moral character. In "doing justly," or "loving mercy," he is apparently left to act as he pleases: but if in the most trivial action he violate the rites of his superstition, he is, in this life, deprived of all the comforts of society, and in the next, condemned to animate the body of some noisome reptile or contemptible animal.

THIS defect in the Hindoo system, is common to it with every religion devised by man. An offended conscience, or a terrified imagination, are uneasy companions; and mankind have ever been eager to embrace the easiest and cheapest means of appeasing them. Whenever it has been given out to the ignorant, that the favour of heaven may be attained, by genuflexions,

flexions, prayers, ablutions, or any ceremony, they invariably have embraced them. To exercise contrition for offences, to break off from iniquity by repentance, to correct the whole life and conversation, and steadily to persevere in virtue, is a painful and difficult task even to the most perfect: by the far greater part this is abandoned, as an unattainable object. Hence a fabric of superstitious rites is constructed, as compensation to the deities for the violation of their laws.

ACCORDING to the number of these rites, and strictness with which they are observed, the rules of virtue, and the necessity of moral rectitude, are regarded as more or less indispensable. The antiquity of the Hindoo superstition has conferred upon it a degree of maturity which has never been attained by any other false system. Its rites and ceremonies are more numerous beyond all comparison: they enter into every department of society, and influence the whole of its manners. The Hindoo, therefore, may rest his present comfort and future happiness upon the observance of its rites, with more plausibility, if not with more confidence, than the other heathen nations, who have established less complex systems of superstition. I will not venture to assert that the lives of the natives are vicious and abandoned in a degree proportioned to the melancholy extent of their superstitious system: but those concerned in the police establishment of Bengal well know the frequency of fraud, robbery, theft, and litigation.

IN Europe, the peace officers are sufficient in number and strength to apprehend delinquents; whereas in this country, the whole of the sebandy corps, a numerous establishment, with the whole train of peons, goraits and corabadars, are inadequate to this purpose. Many regiments of native infantry are stationed in districts where the repressing numerous bands of marauders, or apprehending thieves, is the whole duty they perform.

WHAT is remarkable here, because intimately connected with the present object of our enquiries is, that the devotees or professors of religion, are themselves by far the most numerous, and dangerous robbers in the upper parts of India. The fakkeers, instead of being the instructors of society, are its greatest pests and depredators. It is neither knowledge nor virtue, but idleness, theft, and rapine, that are the lessons to be derived from their presence and example. They wander from the hilly country over every province, and are far more daring in their outrages than the natives of Bengal.

UPON the whole, therefore, it may be fairly concluded, that the immense fabric of superstition established by the Brahmins contributes little or nothing, either to encourage or support the virtue of its adherents; and that it may be justly apprehended, that not a few of that multitude of frivolous rites, have a directly opposite tendency.

DOMESTIC SLAVÉRY AMONG THE HINDOOS.

• • • • •

Calcutta, Dec. 1798.

THE Hindoo jurisprudence, though celebrated for humanity, pays but small regard to the natural rights of man : it establishes a system of slavery more complex than any yet recorded in history. The prerogatives of the magistrate, fortified as they are on every side, leave no room for national or political freedom. Pure despotism, under the veil of Theocracy, has ever been the only government in Hindostan.

DOMESTIC slavery has always been admitted here, as it was formerly in Europe ; but a numerous class, like the Sodera, doomed to servility, though not actually bought and sold, is a singularity in the jurisprudence of India. This class may be compelled to serve a Brahmin of the superior ranks, even though he

he has not purchased him. The Brahmin, however, is not, even in the case of extreme poverty, allowed to serve for a subsistence, a man in the highest rank : what is also singular, the Sodera pays a greater interest for money borrowed than any other person. The son of a Sodera wife inherits only a fourth share of the other sons † ; and every delinquency of this degraded class is punished more severely than the rest : while offences against it are checked by lighter penalties. In other countries it is the aim of legislation to proportion punishment to crimes : here they deal it out according to the rank, rather than the demerit of offenders. Hence the criminal code of this country, as administered by the natives, has become as complicated in detail, as its principles are iniquitous.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

BEFORE we reach those classes that are in absolute slavery, there are intermediate degrees of servitude, corresponding to servants and apprentices in Europe. A student while learning the sciences, performs service for his teacher ; and whatever gain he may acquire during his study, becomes the property of his teacher. Apprentices to the different arts are nearly on the same footing with students ; only their aban-

R doing

* Menu, chap. 9, v. 153.

+ Hindoo Laws, the Brahmin pays least; the Chatree, and the other tribes more; the interest rising in proportion to the degradation of the borrower.

doning the master without fault is punished with banishment. The duties required from these persons do not extend to certain undue services, which here have not only a degree of meanness attached to them, but infer degradation, if performed by any other than a slave, or one of the lowest class*. Their duties seem to correspond with the *obsequium* and *reverentia*, which the Roman law exacted from the clients of a great man to their superior †.

ANOTHER species of servitude seems to resemble the villanage of the feudal system in Europe. When a person, says the law, peoples and cultivates the land of another man, takes a part of the crop, by way of wages; or breeding cattle, takes milk, or a part of the cattle, that servitude is called Bhook Bherut ‡. The celebrated Magna Charta which has by many been deemed a corner stone in the edifice of British liberty, but which, in fact, established only the despotism of the Barons over every order of the state, recognizes this species of servitude, when it stipulates in favour of wards of the Crown, that their property should be restored “*sine vasto hominum et rerum.*”

WE

* Such services are sweeping the house, the necessary, or cleansing a person who is sick.

† Vide Justiniani Instit. Juris Civilis, H. T.

‡ Hindoo laws, chap. viii, sect. 1.

WE have frequently had occasion to notice the obligation laid upon the head of a family to maintain his poor relations; services are expected from such necessitous persons, of the nature of those specified. They are not subjected to what the law terms *undue services*, the *operae serviles* of the Romans, the performance of such inferring a sort of infamy.

SLAVES in India are of many different descriptions, according to the manner in which they have been acquired. No less than fifteen legitimate methods of acquiring slaves are specified in the Eastern code; some of which are peculiar to this quarter of the world.

NOTWITHSTANDING the humane provisions just mentioned, many persons either from being deserted by their relations, or by the death of their parents, are cast destitute upon the public; such unfortunates, like lost goods, become the property of the finder*. If, during a famine, a person has been fed by another, and his life by that means preserved, such become the property of those who entertained him. Many acquisitions of this nature might have been made by Europeans, had their customs authorised the practice.

SOME-

* Vide Hindoo laws, at this title.

SOMETIMES a person to free himself from the importunities of a creditor, delivers himself as a pledge for the debt, or in lieu of payment : this species of slavery is countenanced by the Hindoo as well as the Jewish and Roman jurisprudence. It does not, however, occur to me that the latter admitted of personal slavery on the chance of play, as is the avowed language of statute in this country, as it was by consuetudinary law in America *.

GAMING, and wagering at cock-fighting, are forbidden by the most ancient codes of law ; it would appear therefore that this passion is not only prevalent in early ages, but also most violent, since personal liberty was sometimes thrown in as the last stake. In a country where slavery is permitted, this unlawful act was deemed a forfeiture of liberty.

ANOTHER description of slaves are such as have become Sanyassee, and afterwards have renounced that holy way of life. This conduct implies not merely a dereliction of a state of sanctity and great perfection, but also the breach of solemn vows ; whoever was guilty of it became punishable by the magistrate with the loss of liberty, unless the delinquent were a Brahmin. In that case the criminal was branded in the forehead with the point of a dog's foot, and banished the kingdom †.

THE

* Robertson's History of America.

† Vide Gentoo Laws, chap. , sect. 2.

THE last class of slaves peculiar to the Hindoo laws, consists of those who, from their attachment to a slave girl, give up their liberty for the purpose of having intercourse with her. Such slaves recovered their liberty on renouncing the female slave, and discontinuing the connection.

THE manumission of slaves occupies a distinct title of the Brahminical institution. The mode of doing this varied according to the particular class of slaves to which an individual belonged. When a master releases his slave, a pitcher filled with water, rice, and flowers, is placed upon the head of the slave by the master, and there broken. The contents of the pitcher fall upon the slave's body, while the master declares his intention of making him free; this ceremony confers manumission. A form equally ceremonious was in use among the Romans *.

THE prejudices of the natives requiring every person to leave behind him a son to perform his funeral obsequies, gave rise to another mode of manumission, which is probably not unfrequent. Whoever is without a legitimate child, and hath procreated a son by a female slave, that child together with his mother become free, from the birth of the son.

FREE-

* Institut. Justin. secund. Heinecc. ap. H. T.

FREEDOM was also conferred on such slaves, as from affection or presence of mind in any accident, had preserved the life of their master. Slavery for debt is terminated by the extinction of that debt with interest.

IN general, the domestic slavery of the Hindoos, is attended with less harshness, cruelty, or exhausting labour, than what results from the system among other nations. A stranger is seldom able to distinguish between a slave and any other member of a family. The labour of all the common people is moderate, and their food and cloathing so simple as hardly to admit of degrees.

EVEN in times of calamity if a person sell his slave girl to another against her consent, he is reprehensible, and may be fined: perhaps the whole system as it is practised in Hindostan may be defended on principles of humanity. Scarcity here arises often to be famine: while the great body of the people from the benignity of the climate live almost without cloathing, or house for shelter. There is no provision for a time of difficulty: a man who has nothing but his labour to subsist upon, and perhaps does not possess the value of two days provision, is not supposed in distress, and is often actually happy; at least he takes no thought for to-morrow. During a famine, however, such persons are relieved by a servitude which prevents them from falling victims to hunger. In every warm country cloathing is less necessary;

cessary; lodging almost superfluous; hence the people are indolent and improvident to a degree that in your northern climes would prove fatal. Were a famine as frequent in Italy as it is in this country, the idle Lazaroni of Naples would be benefited by a slavery which might secure them against hunger and want, the necessary result of their improvident idleness.

It may therefore be questioned whether that zeal which burned so furiously among you for the liberation of slaves, was in every case guided by knowledge. There are at least some instances in which the tender mercy of your humane reformers would be cruelty; for independent of the circumstances peculiar, perhaps, to the natives of India, there are many persons whose intellects may not be sufficiently cultivated to guide their conduct in a state of perfect freedom. As Mr. Burke has justly said, liberty is power, and man along with the milk of human kindness, has also a good deal of the wolf in his composition, and till that is purged off it will be dangerous to allow him to associate with sheep, more so to rule over them.

TENDERNESS to slaves as well as to every creature dependent on our care, is undoubtedly one of the precepts which dignifies our benevolent religion: yet at the time when the new testament was written, slavery was far more universal than at present, while no prohibition of that state appears in its pages. The reciprocal

reciprocal duties between master and servant (slave) are there laid down with much plainness, and recommended from motives very powerful; but the very regulation of such a state seems a tacit acknowledgment of its necessity, and infers its continuance. It is no where said, Dismiss your servants and abolish slavery.

THE punishment of slaves has been guarded in the Hindoo code with the most anxious solicitude. Slender punishment with a bamboo switch is permitted on the back, or where the least injury may be felt; and in this respect slaves are put on the same footing with a wife, a son or a daughter. The Jewish law in the earlier periods admitted only of forty stripes, as the highest punishment a master could inflict on his slave; if, however, his crime was so atrocious as to call for the interference of the magistrate, the punishment was crucifixion, a species of infliction peculiarly ignominious, and common to that people with the Romans, and the eastern nations.

SERVANT and slave approach in many instances so near to each other in condition that the lines of discrimination are not always discernible. Even a son is in many respects under the power of his father, and after the legal age, if he remain under the same roof, he foregoes the advantage of earning for himself. The parental power of the Romans also remained so long as the father lived; and in such force, that a son after bearing a public office in the state, fell

fell again under the power of his father, whose authority had only intermitted during the exercise of his public function.

SEVERAL complete titles of Hindoo law relate to partnership; which there does not imply the union of several persons, for a mercantile purpose; but a community of goods, among near relations being together under a father or elder brother. A father while he lives is representative and master of the family. The heritable property of his ancestors, and what he has himself acquired are under his management, but with different restrictions. The former part of the estate he is not allowed to alienate without the consent of his children: of the latter he has the full disposal.

Digitized by srujanika@gmail.com
Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE same reverence and submission which the law ordains to a father, is after his death to be paid by the different members of the family to an elder brother, who then becomes the manager of the whole. If sons claim a division, that division must be made in terms of law; and it would appear from some ancient records that even a father could not refuse this; as appears from the history of the prodigal son, as well as the institutions of Menu.

OF THE ANTIQUITY OF THE HINDOO SCRIPTURES.

Calcutta, Dec. 1798.

It has of late become a fashionable doctrine to ascribe a very high antiquity to the Hindoo Scriptures; to find difficulties in the Mosaic account of the creation; and to feel an affected concern for its incompatibility with authentic records of the most ancient nations.

M. DE VOLTAIRE imagines that he has exposed the Jewish history to a strong degree of ridicule, because it represents the creation of the world as having happened only seven thousand years ago, while the Chinese trace it back to a far greater number of millions. Mr Halhed, the translator of a Persian compilation of Hindoo laws, describes the impression which the antiquity of these books make upon his mind; and the difficulty he finds of bringing

ing down his imagination “ to the obedience of
“ faith *.”

IN a word, our antiquarians are ever in danger of picking up from the immense heap of faithful manuscripts at Benares, some direful fragment that may overturn the chronology of the Bible : like the Canon Recupero, when he examined the stratified lava of Mount Etna, “ they feel the writings of Moses a dead “ weight upon them.” It is to be regretted, that in the severe drudgery of turning over so many volumes of wisdom, they should be so often disturbed by parchments with claims of antiquity so strong, that they effectually stagger *reason*, and alarm them into unbelief.



MR HALHED thus laments, “ that though we
“ may come to the perusal of their records, armed
“ with every argument, and fortified even to preju-
“ dice against the admission of their pretensions, at
“ the same time placing the most implicit reliance
“ upon the Mosaic chronology as generally receiv-
“ ed, yet their plausible accounts of these remote
“ ages, and their undeviating confidence in their
“ own assertions, never can fail to make some im-
“ pression upon us, in proportion as we gain a
“ nearer insight into them.”

As

* This gentleman has since found no difficulty in believing the wild absurdities of the Prophet Brothers.

As the English reader may not possibly be armed with every argument, nor so completely fortified in European prejudices as Mr Halhed, it would be unfair to expose him to the whole force of that plausibility which proved so irresistible to that gentleman. Let it suffice to say, that the Hindoos reckon the duration of the world by four *jogues*, or ages, containing together above eight millions of years.

THE first age, or that of purity (*Suttee jogue*), lasted 3,200,000 years. In this period, which seems to correspond with the golden age of our European poets* ; men practised their duty without the compulsion of law ; their life extended to an hundred thousand years ; and their stature was twenty-one cubits.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

IN the second, or *Tirthah jogue*, one third of the human race became reprobate, and the period of life was reduced to ten thousand years, while that of the age itself was contracted to two millions four hundred thousand years.

IN the third age, the depraved part of the species amounted to one half, and the duration of life only to a thousand years. This age lasted 1,600,000 years.

LASTLY

* Sponte sine lege justitiam colebant.

Ovid. Metam.

LASTLY came the *Kalli jogue*, or present æra, which is supposed to subsist only 400,000 years, of which about 5000 are already elapsed. In this age the depravity of men became universal, and their lives were reduced to the term of 100 years.

SUCH is the “plausibility” of the Hindoo account, which made so deep an impression upon Mr Halhed. “Computation,” says he, “is lost; and “conjecture overwhelmed in the attempt to adjust “such astonishing spaces of time to our confined “notions of the world’s epoch: to such an antiqui-“ty the Mosaic creation is but as yesterday; and to “such ages, the life of Methuselah is but a span!”

OUR “confined notions” respecting the duration of the world, are no rules for other nations in forming their legends, no more than sober history is the standard for writing romance. Happily there is no necessity for reconciling them; otherwise the Hindoo chronology might be found equally consonant to ours as twenty-one cubits are to the length of a man.

NATIONS are as much interested in the dignity of their origin as individuals: high antiquity is universally believed to confer on both a lustre, which the less it is genuine, is the more easily counterfeited. Even in Europe almost every nation carries its origin back to remote periods of darkness and fiction; although there, the gratification of vanity is limited by the prevalence of knowledge and of sober criticism.

Were the early annals of Egypt or Ethiopia discovered, their limited knowledge would probably be found to bear them out in pretensions as gross as those of the Hindoos. We know that in China, where this kind of arrogance is not checked by any incredulity among the people, that system of chronology reaches far beyond that of the Brahmins, where dates must appear to these people as of "yesterday, and their lives as a span." It is sufficient, therefore, to establish the authority of the Brahminical scriptures, that they accord with the suggestions of human vanity in a rude and uninformed nation. Their gigantic size and their longevity bear an exact conformity with fictions and traditions of every early people. These tales of the nurses are gradually systematised, and transcribed into the records of the nation; yet they are still tales though they may happen to be repeated with wonder by a different description of *old women*.

"MERE human reason," says this translator, "upon consideration of the present contracted measure of mortality, can no more reconcile to itself, the idea of patriarchal, than of Brahminical longevity;" and "when the line of implicit faith is once extended, we can never ascertain the precise limits beyond which it must not pass."

THE facility with which this gentleman on some late occasions, has extended the "line of implicit faith," has rendered it doubtful whether, with him it

it has any limits at all. According to him the great source of credibility to the Brahminical writings arises from the undeviating confidence in their own assertions. To many, confident assertions will appear a very singular and precarious test of truth, however strictly Mr. Halhed may have demeaned himself by such a rule. Munnoo, it would seem, one of the most authoritative of the Hindoo sages, has himself affixed a date to his own code. "When ten thousand and ten years of the Sutteejogue were past, on the night of the full moon, in the month Bhadrun, I Munnoo, at the command of Brahma, finished this shaster, that speaks of mens' duty, of justice, and of religion ever instructive." It is sufficient then, it would seem to command the belief of Mr. Halhed, that an impostor confidently asserts, that he has communicated with the deity on the night of the full moon.

Indira Gahani National
Centre for the Arts

The next asserter of the antiquity of these scriptures is Jage-Bulk, who says, "In the Tirtah Jogue, when ninety-five years were past, in the night of Sawun, on the moon's increase, on the day of Mercury, I finished the treatise called Jage-Bulk, which sets forth the offices of religion, and also informs men of the duties of the magistrate."

"WHAT period," says the translator, "shall we possibly assign to those writings, if we disallow the authorities here quoted. If they are false, there must have been a time when the imposition would

" would have been too palpable to have passed upon
" mankind, and where the concurrent testimony of
" the whole world must have risen in judgment a-
" gainst it."

THE imposition running through the whole of these books, as well as their dates, may at first sight seem too palpable to pass upon mankind ; and certainly had they been either capable or disposed to listen to rational evidence, they could never have been received as any thing else than the impositions of craft upon ignorance. But the very reverse of this is the actual state of nations in early times. Their ancient narratives are all marvellous, and all implicitly believed, and it is not wonderful that books, which contain either some prodigy or gross fiction in every page, should also assume a romantic claim to antiquity. The style is uniform in each part; and well suited to gratify a passion for the marvellous, and to gain upon the unsuspecting credulity of a simple people. That the Hindoos should receive these consecrated fictions, is what we should expect from human nature : and had their early records been entirely divested of every romantic absurdity, they would on that account only have displayed something new in the annals of priestcraft and superstition.

WE are further acquainted that, at the beginning of the Kalli jogue, Shukeh Diew, a modern author according to Hindoo records, composed a work, consisting

listing of three thousand and twenty chapters, and detailing the history of India during the three preceding Juges; the succession of its Rajahs and the duration of their reigns. "What shall we say," continues Mr. Halhed "to a work composed four thousand years ago, and from thence tracing mankind upwards for several millions of years?" If such a book exists its contents may fall within the extended line of Mr. Halhed's implicit faith, and may be well suited to his intellect; though to other minds it will probably convey but a small portion of information*.

WHEN we turn from the date of the Hindoo creation, and consider the account given of that great event, we look in vain for that conciseness and sublimity which has been admired in the narrative of the Jewish lawgiver even by the Heathens themselves. "God said, let there be light; and there was light," is an example of the sublime quoted by the celebrated Longinus, who has long held a distinguished rank as a judge of composition. In the work of Menu every thought is frittered down, by an affected subtlety, and a too minute particularity of description: He describes the Spirit of God as moving upon the water, almost in the words of Moses; and the chaotic darkness from which the creation was called forth bears a strong similarity in both systems. The former, how-

T

ever,

* Credat Judæus Appella, non ego.

ever, not only loses its dignity, but even gravity, when after the inferior deities, sages, and other great personages are brought into existence, it specifies the creation “of small and large reptiles, moths, lice, fleas, and common flies, and every biting gnat.”

THE time employed by the divine agency in the Hindoo creation is not specified ; but as the system comprehends no less than fourteen spheres or worlds, six above and seven below that which we inhabit, human notions would lead us to conceive greater space necessary for its completion, had not the same books themselves informed us, “that there are numberless creations, and destructions of worlds ; and that the being supremely exalted, performs all this with as much ease as if in sport, again and again, for the sake of conferring happiness *.”

Centre for the Arts

THIS passage alludes to a notion more clearly expressed elsewhere ; that after the four jogues are completed, another creation will commence, enduring for the same number of ages. The spheres or worlds above ours are the regions destined for the reward of good men, according to their different attainments in holiness. The Swergeh, or first paradise is the general receptacle for all such as have merited a removal from this lower earth : a second place, the Mahun is the abode of Fakeers, and such persons

* Menu Inslit. chap. i, v. 80.

persons as by dint of prayer, have attained a more than ordinary degree of sanctity. The third heaven, Junneh is also the residence of pious souls ; a glorious sphere, beyond which souls are supposed not to pass without some uncommon merit and qualifications *. The other celestial mansions, up to the Suttee (which is highest of all, and the residence of Brahma, with a few particular favourites,) are inhabited by such as have all their lives performed some wonderful penance, or died martyrs for their religion. The highest prize of all in this great lottery of life, is reserved for those who have never in their whole life uttered a fiction ; and to those women who have burned themselves on the funeral pile of their husbands.

THE Hindoo system with all its exuberance of bliss is not more fertile in rewards than punishments ; besides those numberless transmigrations to which it subjects sinners, there are twenty-one different hells, or regions of positive torture, where men are consigned for punishment according to their supposed criminality. None of these punishments are however eternal ; but a redemption from them is admitted, as well as a state of final beatitude by their absorption into the supreme being.

THESE ideas of the creation are received by the Hindoos literally as they are expressed ; and they constitute

* Vide Introd. Gentoo Laws, by Mr. Halked.

constitute an introductory chapter to their religious and civil code; which must prove of high utility if it reconcile each of the classes to its station in society. Brahma, the immediate agent of the creation, is declared to have formed the Brahmin from his mouth; and the duties enjoined him, are not merely symbolically represented by that organ from which he is produced, but to pray, to read, and to instruct, are believed to be qualifications, the unavoidable result of his formation from that organ.

THE Katri by being formed from the arms is qualified with strength to fight and to govern. The Vayse proceeding from the belly are qualified to produce the nourishment of society, by exercising the vocations of agriculture and traffic. The Sodra, being formed from the feet, is doomed to a state of subjection, in which his duty consists of labour, in the service of the other tribes.

IT is the regret of a benevolent writer, that so many millions of the human race are born to no other inheritance but slavery; his feelings would have been still more deeply wounded had he beheld a society the greater part of which was doomed to inherit infamy as well as slavery.

THE Hindoo system, besides these four great tribes just mentioned, sanctions a fifth, or adventitious class, that arises from illegitimate connections between the other tribes. This numerous portion of the people, which

which conducts the mechanic trades and petty traffic, is held infamous as well as servile. All the tribes of Burrun Sunker are believed to be contaminated by the guilt of their parents, and the tradesmen of India are deemed infamous as well as poor. The law makes a distinction in the crimes and punishment of all the classes; an injury to one order is in some cases capital ; while the same offence would, if committed against an inferior, be amerced by a trifling

fine



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

PEN-

PENANCES OF THE HINDOOS.

Allahabad, July 1799.

Of the various modes of appeasing the irritated conscience of offenders, that of *penances* and *expiations* has been most universal among superstitious nations; and from the extent to which they have carried the doctrine, perhaps no invention of priestcraft has been more injurious to the interests of morality. In no stage of society, not even in the highest degrees of virtue and information which it has ever attained, are men beyond the reach of remorse, since they are always liable to misconduct and error; in a rude age, however, when, from the imperfection of government, crimes and irregularities are more frequent, and when the character of deity and all that pertains to hereafter, are viewed through the awful obscurity of ignorance, the powers of conscience are aided by imagination, and its upbraiding are beyond endurance.

IN

IN such cases relief is grasped at without enquiry into the aptitude of the means ; and to restore a man to peace of mind, and self estimation, if it can be done without injuring virtue, is one of the best offices of a religious instructor.

PENANCES and expiations are those external acts appointed by the priesthood, to appease conscience under the notion of removing moral turpitude. They are founded on a principle universal in human nature ; and in every country have, in a greater or less degree, become an engine of power to the priesthood. In ages of ignorance men are least able to detect encroachments of this nature : their superstitious fears seem rather to invite them : hence history has always exhibited this branch of ecclesiastical power and emolument, bearing a strict proportion to the ignorance of the people.

ACTS naturally indifferent are put on the same footing with immoralities ; eating certain articles of food, drinking certain liquors, or touching certain objects, are declared forfeitures, and are expiated by penance as immoral conduct. In most of the Asiatic governments, where the priesthood have acquired great influence, the doctrine of penances and expiations has been extended to almost every action and situation of life ; and the people have been gradually subjected to a jurisdiction as unlimited as their own superstitious imaginations, and provided with punishments as various as their fears.

THE Jewish institutions have been preserved to us in records more authentic than those of any other ancient people. By them we learn in what various cases a man was rendered impure, whether from guilt, or from circumstances accidental, or by actions indifferent. But whatever were the means by which guilt or impurity was contracted, expiation was indispensable, before the sinner could be admitted into society, partake in any religious solemnity, or even eat or drink with his brethren *. These laws were guarded by punishments so severe, as ensured their observance; disobedience in certain cases incurred the same punishment as murder: "The man that shall be unclean and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation."

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

A large portion of the Hindoo Scripture is appropriated to the subject of expiation. The great system of Metempsychosis itself, as laid down in the sacred books, makes a part of this doctrine *. The sufferings endured by undergoing a certain number of transmigrations, are in no instance declared eternal: "when the taint arising from guilt is removed,"

* Numb. chap. xix. v. 22. The delinquent was not merely excluded from society; "but whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean, and the soul that toucheth it shall be also unclean."

† Vide Institut. of Menu, chap. xii. passim.

ed," the soul again recovers beatitude; and after its purification is complete, it is absorbed into the universal spirit *.

THE machinery of the Hindoo system is awful and tremendous; and had it been uniformly employed in the defence of virtue, its effects must always have been considerable, as well as very salutary.

THEIR regions of torment are various, and in great number; and the pains suffered in them are proportioned to the supposed guilt of the offenders; who "as often as they repeat criminal acts are doomed to pains more and more intense, in despicable forms upon this earth. They shall first have a sensation of agony in Tamisra †, or utter darkness, and in other seats of horror. Multifarious tortures await them: they shall be mangled by ravens and owls; and swallow cakes boiling hot; shall walk over inflamed fands; and shall feel the pangs of being baked like the vessels of a potter ‡."

EVEN these regions of darkness are not altogether inaccessible to hope, and the criminal in the abyss of

U torment

* Ibid, v. 22.

† One of the hells of the Hindoos.

‡ Chap. xii. v. 74, et infra.

torment might look forward to a period in which his guilt would be expiated, and when the gates of bliss would be no longer shut against him. Eternal punishments seem, to the Hindoo, injurious to virtue, and repugnant to mercy.

So far may the Hindoo system of expiation be regarded as abetting the cause of virtue, but there are other parts of it that seem calculated to subvert the moral sense, and obliterate the distinction between right and wrong. The classification of crimes totally unequal, and the subjecting actions indifferent, to the same punishment as offences the most injurious to society, certainly tends to weaken the moral faculty. It is a maxim in legislation, that law should not counteract morals, and that the crimes of the statute-book should correspond with the dictates of conscience; but in a system erected by interested craft upon ignorance, we are not to expect that this rule shall be strictly adhered to.

We find accordingly in the Braminical code, crimes of the most different degrees of turpitude classed together, without any regard to proportion in their punishment. Thus, “forgetting texts of scripture,” is classed with “perjury;” eating things forbidden, to “killing a friend;” incest and adultery, are compared to slaying a bull or a cow †; drinking for-

† Menu, chap. xiii. v. 55, &c.

forbidden liquor, to killing a brahmin. In several instances, actions highly meritorious according to our notions, are put on the same footing with a conduct implying great infamy. "Working in mines of any sort, engaging in dykes, bridges, or other great mechanical works," is classed with "subsisting by the harlotry of a wife, and preparing charms to destroy the innocent †."

IN order to account for this artificial and factitious system of morality, it must be remembered, that the more crimes are multiplied, the oftener must the sinner have recourse to expiation, and the priests in consequence, must profit more frequently by his absolution. "Penance," says the sacred text, "must invariably be performed for the sake of expiation; for they who have not expiated their sins, will again spring to birth with disgraceful marks." This passage seems to allude to a very singular invention of the Brahmins to multiply the number of cases in which expiation became necessary; they encourage the belief that every corporeal mark or infirmity at birth, must have been occasioned by some sin committed either by the parents themselves, or the person himself in a former state; and in either case expiation became necessary before he could be admitted to the comforts of society.

" If

† Ibid, v. 64. It is scarcely possible to invent a system more repugnant to public improvement.

“ If a twice born man by the will of God in this world, or from his natural birth, have any corporeal mark of an expiable sin committed in this or a former state, he must hold no intercourse with the virtuous, while his penance remains unperformed.” The Jews whose system of crimes and expiations was nearly as complex as that of the Hindoos, and in some particulars bears a strict resemblance to it, seem to have entertained this strange opinion. “ Was it *this man*, or his parents that sinned, that he was *born blind*? ” is a question implying this belief. The leprosy, which was once more frequent among that people than at present must have been regarded as proceeding from some moral turpitude ; at least the expiations, after it was declared to be removed, were ^{Centre for the Arts} equally numerous and expensive as those required for the removal of guilt *.

BUT if farther proof of the disposition of the Brahmins to multiply crimes, and the necessity of expiating them were needed, sufficient would be found in their extension of this mode of discipline to involuntary offences †. Although no axiom in morals

* These marks were various, and expressive of the crimes, committed by the person who bore them. “ The stealer of a lamp, suffered blindness ; the drinker of spirits, black teeth ; the slayer of a Brahmin, marasmus ; the violator of his gooru’s bed, deformity in the generative organs.”

† See chap. xiv. *passim*.

rals can be clearer, than that intention alone constitutes guilt, and so far only as evil intention can be shewn, so far is criminality established ; the man, however, who has unintentionally occasioned the death of another, feels an uneasiness somewhat resembling remorse : he feels desirous to make compensation even for unintended mischief. Upon this feeling the doctrine of expiating involuntary offences has been founded ; penances of great severity have been ordained for them. " If a Brahmin, says Menu, " have killed a man of the sacerdotal class, without " malice, he must make a hut in a forest, and dwell " in it twelve whole years, subsisting on alms, for " the purification of his soul. If the slayer be a " king, he may perform sacrifices with presents of " great value : if a person of wealth has committed " this offence, he may give all his property to some " Brahmin learned in the Veda §."

INVOLUNTARY guilt being thus established, and the very touching of a great proportion of the surrounding objects incurring defilement, as well as killing any sensitive animal, from an insect to a camel, the Hindoo must be in perpetual bondage ; that he is haunted with continual apprehensions of transgressing

§ Chap. vii. v. 73, &c. The Jewish priests held upon this subject a similar doctrine. A city of refuge protected the killer ; but if found beyond its limits he might be punished.

gressing against some article of this vast system of criminal law, is not to be wondered at. Sins of omission, as well as positive offences, equally expose him to the expiating discipline of the priests ; and that he escapes a single day of his life from incurring inflictions, is probably more owing to their forbearance, than to his own purity.

ARMED with this mighty engine of oppression, the Brahmins, upon a near view, will be found, perhaps, to exercise their authority with no great rigour. Empowered to inflict such a number of penalties, which all incur, whether they are lazy or idle, awake or asleep, there seem but few instances of cruelty or even hardship sustained by the exercise of a power thus unbounded. The truth is, the superstition of the people is so great that they willingly undergo any penance : it equals, and sometimes far surpasses all that the priesthood exacts from it. After having satisfied all the rigid demands of the system of expiation, the pious Hindoo often invents new privations and austerities for the exercise of his patience, and the enlivening of his piety. Of this kind are the pilgrimages he undertakes to places of peculiar sanctity ; the vows of abstinence and mortification which he regularly discharges, and the frequent corporeal pains which he inflicts upon himself.

THE place from which I now write, is celebrated for the sanctity which is supposed to be conferred on such

such as bathe at the junction of the united streams of the Ganges and the Jumna. Ten or twelve thousand pilgrims may be seen at once crowding to the banks; their admission to the sacred spot is purchased by a certain sum for each man, paid to the Brahmins. Between the piety and the avarice of the Hindoo, there is sometimes a great struggle; these two passions seem to occupy his whole soul. This year the Brahmins insisted on a certain sum, which the pilgrims for a while refusing to pay, one of the former made a feint of cutting his hand. This measure, the efficacy of which to us is not very obvious, had at once the desired effect: all agreed instantly to pay down the sum demanded, convinced that if blood had been drawn from that sacred person, the whole crowd of pilgrims must have suffered a sentence of damnation, which ages of suffering could not have reversed.

ANOTHER class of voluntary penances, for the sake of advancing the sanctity of the performer, are those numerous austeries that are prescribed in consequence of vows. If a person becomes unfortunate, and on this account loses that consequence which he formerly held in society, he consoles his vanity by turning faint; and on that score draws to himself a greater degree of consideration than perhaps he enjoyed as a man of rank and fortune. In pursuit of this object, thousands make vows of austerity, and renounce the world. Clothed in skins, they wander as mendicants, or retire to the forests, and subsist on

wild fruits, or the roots of plants. When such a resolution is taken, it is irrevocable; the severest punishments are inflicted on such as retract their vows, or return to society.

THESE hermits are considered as actually dead; their property is divided among their relations, and the funeral obsequies are performed to their manes. In ancient times, the age of forty or fifty years was the period of taking this vow; the discharge of which is supposed to confer the highest degree of perfection to which in this life a man could attain. The bodily pains inflicted on themselves by the anchorets of this country, from their whimsical nature and their severity, are at once repugnant to reason, and beyond the limits of credibility. They only who have seen the horrid scenes displayed at certain Hindoo festivals, will be able to form a conception of the extravagances which superstition can dictate, or of the sufferings which fortitude can endure.

22

RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN THE JEWISH AND HINDOO RITES.

Calcutta, Dec. 1798.

THAT there should be a resemblance in the laws and usages of nations in a similar state of improvement, is what we are led to expect equally by history, and common reflection. The singular coincidence between many of the Hindoo customs and those of the Jews recurs too frequently, and with too close a resemblance to have arisen solely from this cause. If men originally sprung from one common stock, and we are told that they did; their primitive institutions, would migrate along with every tribe at its removal from the parent country. The farther, therefore, that men are traced, and the nearer you approach to the original stock, the greater similarity must be found in their customs. The Hindoo scriptures and our own, are the most ancient records yet known: the laws in each code are in some cases exactly the

same; and in many they are similar: were other records still more ancient to be discovered 'tis possible that these would display a still stronger resemblance, till we at last arrived at the history of one primary and individual people.

THE doctrine of the transmigration seems to have been embraced by the disciples of Moses, and of Menu; and as this was considered as a state of expiation, the prayers of a man's posterity were believed to operate in behalf of their suffering ancestor, and to render his purification more expeditious and less painful. Hence the custom of adopting a child was practised, with a view to this very end perhaps, in both countries. The duty of leaving a son is so sacred and indispensable among the Hindoos, that a second and even a third wife is allowed, if there was no child by the first *. Poligamy was practised by the Jews, and also concubinage, but this is too common a custom among the eastern nations to found any argument of their connection.

THE necessity of leaving a son to perform these duties, dictated that custom of procreating a child on the widow of a deceased brother who had left no offspring. This connection is only permitted in the Hindoo system, not enjoined; and must cease as soon as

* And the maid (Esther) was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, adopted for his own daughter. Est. ii. 7.

as the object is obtained *: In the Jewish law the duty of *raising up seed* to a deceased brother, is matter of positive precept, the neglect of which seems to have incurred no small degree of infamy †.

THE ceremonies at marriage are extremely various and complex in the Hindoo code, which permits eight different forms, all affecting the rank of the parties, and their progeny differently. In some of these forms the contract is made, by giving presents to the parents of the bride, a practice which seems to be a remnant of the custom of purchasing wives, so frequent among rude nations ‡. This practice obtained among the Jews in the early periods of their history, when we find Jacob serving for both the daughters of Laban.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE intermarriages of different ranks are permitted in the Hindoo system; but such are always deemed disgraceful, and vitiate the offspring which is degraded. The tribes of the Jews are kept distinct, as well as the castes of the Indians, the daughters

* He who lasciviously dallies with the widow of a deceased brother, though she be legally married to him is disgraced. Ch. iii. v. 173.

† Then shall his brother's widow loose the shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face; and shall answer and say, so shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. Deut. xxv. 9.

‡ Vide Neh. xii. 28.

ters of Zetophehad are ordered to marry in their own tribe; and priests who could not shew their genealogy, or who married a stranger were considered as polluted, and were degraded from their office *.

THE laws of the sage Menu, like those of greater part of the eastern legislators, speak of the female sex in terms, that according to European notions would be deemed highly disrespectful; and what does no great credit to his consistency, he requires from the sex a conduct more correct and decorous, than can be hoped for from an ordinary share of judgment and circumspection. When legislating for the sex, this oracle observes, that “ Through their passion for men, their mutable temper, their want of settled affection, and their perverse nature, let them be guarded in this world ever so well, they soon become alienated from their husbands.”— “ Women have no business with the Veda; thus is the law fully settled: having therefore no evidence of law, and no knowledge of expiatory texts, sinful women must be as foul as falsehood itself †.”

YET with all these bad qualities they are expected to remain constant in their own house, and are not even “ to laugh without covering the face with a veil,

* Among the early Romans marriage was contracted in three ways; coemptione, confariatione, et usu.

† Menu, ch. ix. v. 15, &c.

" veil. Unseasonable sleep, rambling abroad, dwelling in the house of another, are declared crimes which bring infamy upon their husbands." They are declared to be always in a state of dependence or pupilage; first in the house of their father, afterwards in that of the husband, and lastly in that of their son.

BARRENNESS, bearing female children, being diseased are deemed sufficient causes of superseding a wife and marrying another. So little confidence do they place in their virtue, that speaking to, or sitting upon the same couch with a man are declared to be adulterous acts, and severely punishable; actual adultery if committed with a person of birth incurs death.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

BARRENNESS in a married woman is considered as a great misfortune, equally in the Jewish and Indian code; in both, the eldest son obtained certain rights by the priority of his birth. In the Jewish law the first born was considered as sacred, and was redeemed. The Hindoo philosopher grants him the sole right of invoking the gods, and offering oblations to the manes in the Sradha. A double portion of the inheritance is declared the legal right of the first born in both systems; but among the Hindoos there are many modifications of this rule, according to the virtue of the son, or the rank of his mother.

THAT

THAT whole title of law relating to defilement, and the means of removing it bears a strong similarity among both nations: and this part of their superstition seems of every other to have made the most indelible impression upon the minds of both. The modern Jews are as punctilious with regard to the killing of meat, its kind, the person who dresses it, as their ancestors were two thousand years ago. The first teachers of christianity, who intended to promulgate a system of morals instead of ritual observances, had great difficulty in recalling their attention from the observance of days and ascetic devotion. It seems to have been of all things the most difficult to persuade them that true holiness consisted not of "meats nor of drinks," but "in righteousness, peace and joy." Their obstinate adherence to these particulars seems the very circumstance which every where preserves the Jews a distinct people, though dispersed throughout every part of the world. When the Hindoos are removed, as at Astracan, they remain equally secluded and distinct.

IN both systems all forbidden meats induce impurity. All flesh meat is rigidly forbidden the Hindoo as his ordinary food, but such animals as are declared clean, (which are nearly the same with those permitted to the Jews) might be legally killed for

sacrifice; and on that occasion they might be eaten
meritoriously *.

OTHER objects of defilement, such as a dead body,
an unclean person, a woman after childbirth, in her
menes, a man after an impure dream, with various
others are exactly the same, and the methods of pu-
rification are also similar.

WHAT we are least prepared to expect in the his-
tory of the two countries, at present under our review,
is a resemblance in their worship and religious cere-
monies. The great and peculiar object of the Jewish
system was to inculcate monotheism, and to establish
a nation with select rites; and, here it must be ac-
knowledged that the notions taught by the Hindoo
system fall infinitely short of that sublimity of truth
and dignity which the Jewish scriptures inculcate up-
on this subject.

THE Supreme Being is depicted in the former,
with vague and indistinct attributes: the actions im-
puted to him in the creation and government of the
world, are often puerile and absurd; and worship is
never mentioned as exclusively due to him. Ancestors
and deities are the objects of daily reverence in the
sacrifices of the Hindoo, but he has no institution in
honour

* On a solemn offering to a guest, at sacrifice, and in holy
rites to the manes or the gods; but on these occasions only,
may cattle be slain: this law Menu enacted. Ch, vi. v. 41.

honour of one Supreme God, entitled to the exclusive homage of mankind.

AFTER marking this essential difference it is just to observe, that the liturgies of both systems bear in other particulars a close resemblance. There are similar altars, the same incense and offerings, and the respect of the worshipper at both was expressed by similar acts. The Jews had in the service of their temple dancing and singing women, who had a regular maintenance from the public funds of the church *. There is the same establishment at present in all the considerable temples of the Deccan †.

THE servants of the altar, were, in each country, chosen only from one particular tribe, which was invested with high rank, and supported by a fixed contribution from the rest of the inhabitants. Certain particular acts were necessary before a person of the priestly rank could perform any religious office. Investiture with the sacred string, a girdle and a staff on his sixteenth year, was necessary to the consecration of a priest. The twice-born all underwent at certain periods a species of consecration which constituted their *second* birth; and in consequence of it they enjoyed

* And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers, and the porter every day his portion. Neh. xii. 47.

† Menu, ch. ii. v. 38, et infra. Exod. xxxi. 10.

enjoyed peculiar privileges ever after in the eye of the law. The Jewish ritual mentions the “consecration of the priests, the clothes of service, and the holy garments.”

THE code of Menu makes frequent mention of the twice born, which consist of such of the three higher classes as have been invested with the sacrificial thread. The language of the New Testament, which metaphorically uses the phrases of “regeneration, and being begotten and born again,” most probably alluded to some of the Jewish rites that were analogous to those of Menu.

BUT the deviations of the Jews from the worship prescribed in their law were frequent. Their worship of images, and false gods, in the groves and high places, is charged against them on many occasions* : these were the practices of the surrounding nations. They must recur to every person's mind who has observed the multitude of Hindoo images upon some of the rocks on the Ganges, and beneath the shade of large trees. The household gods which were stolen from Laban by his daughter, probably resembled those small images, particularly of the calf, of which the Hindoos are still so fond, and be-

Y

fore

* Judges, chap. vi.

fore which you see them prostrating themselves daily *.

FROM a coincidence of the customs of these nations in so many various and detached particulars, it is probable that through all the warmer climates of Asia, a considerable similarity obtains in the manners of every nation ; and from the singular stability and permanency of their institutions, a minute examination of them at the present moment will tend to establish the truth of ancient history.

THE Jewish and Hindoo scriptures mutually illustrate and confirm the authenticity of each other ; and the present customs of the Asiatics proving so perfectly similar to what we find related in both, adds greatly to the credibility of either, at least as a faith-

* The people here are guided by false prophets, and dreamers of dreams, in the same manner in which we are told the Jews were †. A gentleman in the neighbourhood of Benares lately wished to have a place of worship removed from the vicinity of his house. He consulted the Brahmins whether it could be done, and came forward with a liberal offer. He received no immediate answer, but one of their number gave out that he had a place of greater sanctity for the pooja, revealed to him in a dream. The people gave him implicit credit, removed the pagoda, and the priest received his promised reward from the person for whose accommodation the dream had been sent.

† Deut. xiii. 1.

faithful record of manners. Parts of the Jewish history, from their opposition to European manners, and their repugnance to our ideas, have been held up as objections to the authenticity of these records ; on many of these the Hindoo records bestow the fullest credibility.

THAT severe law which ordained a woman to be stoned to death, who on marriage did not discover the “tokens of virginity,” is invested with the fullest authenticity by perusing the Hindoo code : In this we observe severe inflictions in the same circumstances ; and a whole chapter of regulations is devoted to ascertain the punishment of those offences by which these tokens may be destroyed *.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

IN the same manner, from the peculiarity of the Jewish manners, and from the great damage supposed to be sustained from eating impure food, it was criminal to offer it : and since chastity in a woman was so essential in the eye of the law, to asperse her on that head was punished with a severe fine. The institutions of the Brahmins upon these points are perfectly similar : whoever caused a priest to eat impure food, or drink wine, is fined, and in certain cases is put to death † ; nor is he treated with less severity who falsely asperses the chastity of a woman’s conduct.

FROM

* Vide Gentoo Laws, chap. 20. sect. 5. passim.

† Idem, chap. 11. sect. 6.

FROM these numerous coincidences of the manners and writings of the natives of this country with those of the ancient Jews, it has been supposed that in some former period an intercourse was maintained between them. This some have concluded to have taken place during their abode in Egypt; others with greater probability have imagined that their intercourse arose from the residence of the Jews in the dominions of the Babylonish kings, who then possessed the countries bordering upon Hindostan; as we are informed by the sacred books: "Now it came to pass, in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces *.)"

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

PECU-

* This passage explains the cause of the elevation of a Jewess, Esther, to the Persian throne. Vide Est. ch. 1. v. 1.

THE AUTHORITY CLAIMED BY THE BRAHMINS.

Calcutta, Dec. 1798.

THE sacred books of the Hindoos * comprehend a more voluminous system of law, theology and moral science, than those of any other nation : the mythology of the Egyptians, ^{Indira Gandhi National} Greeks, and Romans, seem only detached shreds, when compared with these compendious volumes.

IT regulates not only the interior economy of every private family, but contains the whole system
of

* A small portion of them only has yet been translated ; a compilation by certain Brahmins collected at Calcutta by Governor Hastings, and rendered by Mr Halhed into English, under the title of 'A Code of Gentoo Laws ;' another portion containing 'the Institutes of Menu,' has been translated by Sir W. Jones. In the observations here offered, these sources of information are referred to as authentic.

of jurisprudence, by which property is held, and the rules by which government itself is administered. The Hindoos believe these books to contain treasures of inspired wisdom, and they consistently submit to their ordination the whole structure of society, and the regulation of every part of it.

THE whole must, however, be regarded as the most complete system of priesthood ever erected for the subjugation of mankind. Knowledge, in the nature of things, must always acquire an ascendant over timidity and ignorance ; and the chief peculiarity displayed by the Asiatic nations is the lofty and imposing tone which it assumes, and the submissive tameness and credulity with which every pretension to it is received by the people.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE supreme powers, Legislative, Executive, and Judicial, seem, under the Hindoo governments, to have been retained originally in the hands of the Brahmins. By them, the prince is styled the magistrate, and his powers in every department are marked out by the priesthood in the sacred books, the interpretation, and perhaps the composition of which, was exclusively claimed by their order.

MENU, the son of GOD, himself a divine person, publishes by them his authoritative commands, to which the monarch seems to have been subjected as much as any of the people. Government is in the strictest sense theocratical ; the Brahmins administer it

it, and are declared in the Scripture “to be by right the chief of the whole creation *.” The very birth of a Brahmin is a constant incarnation of the God of Justice: when a Brahmin springs to light, he is born above the world, the chief of all creatures, assigned to guard the treasury of duties, religious and civil †.

THE world and every thing it contains is declared to belong in substance to this order, for whom it is asserted to have been created; and “through the benevolence of the Brahmin other mortals enjoy life.”

THESE claims, lofty as they certainly are, were not perhaps ill-suited, or disproportioned to the simplicity of those upon whom they were made; nor is it surprising that the Brahmins interfered in the legislature, and all the functions of government.

By the Sacred Books, the magistrate is not only directed *when*, and *how* he shall make war; but in the raising and discipline of armies; the choice of all his servants, from the highest officer of state to the lowest menial attendant. He is allowed no exclusive or individual power, but is directed to choose a certain number of counsellors, and “to one learned Brahmin distinguished among them all, he is charged

* Menu, chap. 1st, v. 93.

† Idem, v. 98, 99.

‡ Idem, chap. v. 101.

charged to impart his momentous counsel, and to intrust to him with full confidence *all transactions**.”

THE place of his residence, and the choice of his ambassadors, are not committed to the discretion of the prince; his instructions descend even to the nomination of a domestic priest, and to the payment of his menial servants†. The *quantum* of taxes to be imposed on each class of inhabitants, is fixed with considerable precision; different proportions of revenue are to be drawn from merchandize, from agriculture, and from manual labour, all specified with a particularity that seems almost to preclude discretionary power in that important branch of prerogative. Upon the Brahmin, however, no tax whatever can be imposed: even in the case of crimes and confiscation, none of his property can ever be seized by the prophane hands of the magistrate. It must go to the priesthood; “for a king, though dying with want, must not receive any tax from a Brahmin learned in the Vedas.”

THE priesthood is not only exempted from all contribution to the support of government, but a support from the state is decreed for them; all ranks are enjoined to make them presents, the merit of

* Menu, chap. 7, v. 58, 59.

† One ana a day as wages, are specified, v. 124.

of which is declared in certain cases to be infinite; and in all, better than offerings of holy fire ||.

THE sacrifices of the king are always to be accompanied with gifts of different kinds to the Brahmins, besides their legal provision from the state. The judicial power seems to have been vested in this order; for though the king was allowed to decide causes personally, as in the feudal monarchies of Europe, he was always obliged to be counselled by the Brahmins, and when not present, the whole judicial power was exercised by this order.

THE Hindoo governments seem then to have been hierarchical, in the strictest sense of the word: whether the priests pretended to receive their commands from Menu or Brigha, they were always absolute over the people, who were as effectually ruled by them as the Romans were by Romulus when tutored by Egeria.

THAT we do not now see the Brahminical hierarchy in this plenitude of power, must be ascribed to the conquest of the country by a people hostile to this system.

IN every thing, not relating to government, its influence seems as powerful as ever: its dictates are as absolutely binding upon the Hindoo in his eating, drinking, ablutions, and every part of his behaviour, as the decrees of fate. In Thibet, where the Chinese government has made but few encroachments on the independence of that country, the Lama is not only a prince and king, but a deity worshipped by vast multitudes, even beyond the limits of his territory.

AT whatever time the Sacred Books of the Hindoos were written, they contain numberless allusions to a state of society considerably advanced in the arts of life: they mention towns of eight cosi in length, or sixteen miles, a circumstance which implies a degree of population far exceeding that of the Jewish nation at any period of their history ‡. They establish a *jus gentium*, or law of nations, more humane and refined than has ever been adopted by any people in the first stages of their union. Every man is forbidden to strike his foe with sharp arms concealed in wood; with arrows mischievously barbed; with poisoned arrows, or with darts blazing with fire: he is forbid to strike his enemy when alighted from his car, when he sues for life with closed palms; when he is asleep, or when he has lost

‡ Mention is made of officers commanding an hundred, and officers a thousand towns.

lost his coat of mail*. Prisoners, it is true, were made slaves; but this was allowed in the brightest periods of the Roman history.

THEIR tolerance for the vanquished in matters of religion, seems far to outdo the indulgence of paganism itself; tho' impartial history has declared it more accommodating than the Theism either of the Jews, Christians, or Mahomedans. A belief of the unity of Deity, according to Mr Hume, as it implies the falsehood of all other systems, leads to intolerance towards their abettors, as insultors of the majesty of the Supreme Being. Be this as it may, the Romans generally permitted the conquered the worship of their deities, and had on some occasions the complacency to associate them with their own. This highest condescension of European conquerors is strictly enjoined by every Hindoo prince, who is commanded, after conquering a country, to respect the deities adored in it, and their virtuous priests; he is bound also to establish the laws of the conquered nation as declared in *their books* †.

THIS injunction of their Scripture is not merely a speculative point of faith with the Hindoo, but actuates his conduct. Numbers listen with silent respect

* The cases mentioned are more numerous, and breathe greater humanity than is practised at present by any people.

† Menu, chap. 7. v. 201, 202.

spect to the Christians and Mahomedans, when worshipping a deity to them unknown : their conduct he deems pious and commendable ; and their system, however good, the Hindoo is satisfied must be inferior to that perfect wisdom which breathes in his own.



PECULIARITIES

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

peculiarities of the Musselman—THEIR CHARACTER.

Calcutta, Jan. 1798.

THE Mahomedans by whom the peninsula of Hindostan was so long held in subjection, are still a numerous race*, and preserve a remarkable difference in their character and manners as well as their religion. By the latter they are laid under no obligation to early marriage, and this circumstance perhaps is the cause of that dissolute conduct with which both sexes are so generally charged. By far the greater part of the females who live by prostitution, and in India they are very numerous, belong to the Mahomedan race. The men are, if possible, still more universally dissolute; so that from a premature and excessive waste of their strength they are soon overtaken by the debility of age.

THEY

* Some say the tenth part of the whole inhabitants.

THEY are, notwithstanding the prohibition of their religion, often addicted to intoxication, by taking spirits and opium, or the excessive use of tobacco. Unaccustomed to restrain their inclinations, they are proud, irascible, and vindictive. A few of them are generally employed as domestics, in waiting at the table, or in the occupation of cookery, duties which the Hindoos, from superstition, are unwilling to perform: many enlist in the native battalions; but whatever station they occupy, they are far more insolent and troublesome than four times their number of heathens. You can by no means repose in a Musselman the same degree of trust, that you safely confide in a Hindoo; his subordination must be more rigid and unremitting.

THOUGH their faith be theism, and a much nearer approach to our standard of religious opinions, than the popular creed of the other natives, it does not appear that they are profited in their moral conduct by this circumstance: not one in an hundred is able to read his own Scriptures; and the number able to profit by what they read is still much less considerable. The idea therefore entertained by some of our divines, that the progress of Islamism over so great a part of the world, is likely to pave the way for that of Christianity, is rather to be regarded as a fond conjecture, than a fact at all established by experience. The Coran, it is true, allows considerable authority to our sacred records, and acknowledges the truth of Christ's mission as a

subor-

subordinate prophet ; but this has never influenced the conduct of Musselmans with lenity, or even forbearance to those of that persuasion. Every system differing from their own, is regarded with equal abhorrence and contempt.

HENCE has arisen that persecuting and fanatical spirit, which has ever marked the conduct of this people ; whose cruelties in attempting to convert the Hindoos, cannot be contemplated without horror. Even where his religion is not concerned, the manners of the moorman are frequently characterised by brutality. The treatment of the British prisoners taken by Hyder Ally, is perhaps unexampled for deliberate, and unprovoked cruelty, in the annals of history. Some of the officers, after languishing many years in prison, where they were loaded with irons like the vilest criminals, were forced upon the sad alternative of engaging in the service of the tyrant, or of dying by poison. In these noisome dungeons, some died of famine, many were driven to distraction by despair, and many perished by disease. In all cases where this cruelty proved fatal, the victims were denied the honour of a grave ; their bodies were thrown out, and devoured by dogs and vultures. The particulars of these enormities were committed to writing by an officer of great veracity, who was himself one of the few who survived the outrage of that unrelenting monster *.

THAT

* Vide Memoirs of the war, &c.

THAT contempt for learning, with which these zealots are actuated, perhaps adds to the ferocity of their disposition*; as it certainly destroys every principle of tolerance and liberality to such as follow a different system of religious faith. The privates taken by Hyder, from this cause, suffered a refinement of cruelty equally disgraceful to the tyrant, and degrading in the eyes of those who were the unhappy victims of it: they were not only compelled to enter the service, but to undergo the painful initiatory rite to the religion of the despot.

IN the practice of the Mahomedan worship, there is a number of rites equally frivolous and unmeaning with those of the Hindoos themselves. Some of their holiday solemnities are disgraced by a ferocity to which the latter are happily strangers. The procession at the Mohurram, a festival in commemoration of the death of Hosseim and Hassen, are accompanied with gladiators, who fight each other with daggers and spears, to the great edification of the brutal multitude. In these encounters, which last for ten days, blood is often shed, and several lives lost; for the tragedy which is begun in show, as zeal becomes more ardent and ungovernable, terminates often in all the horrors of reality.

ONE

* *Scilicet ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes,
Emollit mores, nec finit esse feros.*

ONE difference between the Hindoo and Mahomedan superstition, is the more worthy of remark, because it is attended with very important consequences. The former, so far from producing a spirit of proselytism, positively admits of no converts. Any person professing a regard for its rites, is allowed to observe them, but no degree of sincerity, or even zeal in these professions, will entitle him to any rank in society, or to associate even with the lowest class. All religion, according to them, may be in some respects true and acceptable to the Deity, but to the Hindoo they appear so inferior in purity to his own, that to associate with their professors would pollute and degrade him forever.

A Hindoo of any rank, by changing his religion, entails disgrace not only on himself, but on all his near relations, who lose their cast, and live in perpetual exclusion from society. It is said that one in this place lately made application to a chaplain in order to be baptised, from this vindictive motive, after having quarrelled with his relations. The chaplain very properly rejected his application as utterly repugnant to that system which he meant to embrace.

THE Mussulman faith is in all these particulars directly the reverse. The conversion of a heathen is one of the most meritorious actions a Mahomedan can perform; and there is no means however cruel or immoral, which are not regarded as sanctified by

this holy end : hence the intolerant zeal, and cruel persecutions which have ever marked the progress of Mahomedan conquests.

THESE two races of men, after living so many centuries under the same government, and in the same society, gradually approximate in many of their opinions, and in some points acquire a similarity of manners. The Mussulmans in the service of Europeans, are nearly equally fastidious and averse to any work which they conceive out of their routine of duty, under the pretence of its being incompatible with his cast. The man who dresses hair will feel himself degraded by taking charge of clothes ; and he who engages for the latter object, will for no consideration condescend to sweep the floor. The servants who attend the table are conceived to move in a sphere far too high for carrying an umbrella or a lamp before their master. This fastidious behaviour gratifies at once their pride and their indolence. Too ignorant to conceive that there can be no turpitude in actions not immoral, or to be convinced that real worth and dignity must arise from carefully performing the duties of their station, they prove, as servants, equally fastidious, and less useful than the Hindoos themselves. The scruples of rank, and cast, give an air of consequence to that ignorant people, and the Mahomedans readily adopt a foible so gratifying as these to their pride and indolence. This circumstance obliges Europeans, even of moderate rank, to keep up an establishment of domestics

superior

superior in number to that of a nobleman in Europe ; and after this trouble and expence has been incurred, he is much worse served than he would there find himself by two or three domestics.

ANOTHER melancholy point of coincidence, in the situation of these people, is the small influence which the religion of both has upon moral conduct. There is hardly any instance in which the faith of either operates to direct him in the practice of justice and mercy : and in the case of the Mussulman, there are a thousand examples of his religion being made the pretext for violating their dictates. The Mahomedan superstition has a more feeble hold over its votaries even in urging them to a compliance with its own rites, than the Indian system, either because its neglect is not followed by such dreadful consequences, or because the system is less mature, and its professors removed at a greater distance from Mecca, the centre of its power, and the place where its full vigour is perhaps unimpaired. From whatever cause, the Mussulman is certainly less a slave to his superstition, than the Hindoo. Though enjoined sobriety, he is frequently drunk ; believing honesty to be a duty, he is often a cheat ; and convinced of the expediency of marriage, he lives frequently in the habit of promiscuous debauchery.

IN their intercourse with the female sex, the manners of both classes of inhabitants bear a great similarity. Female virtue among each, is secured by a seclu-

seclusion of the sex almost totally from society ; and that by a strictness and vigilance well suited to the mean idea they entertain of their fidelity. The man who is conscious of habitual frailty in himself, cannot easily give credit to another for continence and self-denial, virtues almost beyond his conception. The Haram and the Zenana † are therefore guarded with equal solicitude, not only from the visits of the males, but from the intrusion of every eye : and, perhaps, neither the Hindoo nor the Mussulman form a wrong estimate of female virtue in the East. Whatever virtue obtains there, must be either constitutional, or the effect of restraint. What virtue, regulated by principles of duty, can be expected from persons almost without education, who have been excluded from their infancy from every active scene of life, where alone there can be self-government, and where either virtue or temptation can alone exist ? The women in Hindostan seem accordingly to possess but few ideas, and but little chastity. Accustomed to regard themselves, what in fact they have ever been, merely the instruments of sensual pleasure, and the means of perpetuating the species, that object engages the whole range of their knowledge, and constitutes the sum of their duty. To them this must appear the great end of their being ; and if the idea of guilt or culpability ever meet them, it must arise from their neglect.

^{Indira Gandhi National}
+ Among persons of rank only.

glect of so important a duty. To rely upon the prudence and self-denial of persons impressed with such ideas, might eventually prove a greater mark of credulity than of wisdom.

IN these mansions of voluptuous indulgence, the Rajahs and Mahomedan Nabobs spend a great portion of their time, and seem to enjoy their principal comfort. Unaccustomed themselves to mental exertion, perhaps the qualities of the mind are not necessary to their enjoyment. Their pleasure seems chiefly sensual, and incapable of being animated or improved by those accomplishments which are deemed so necessary by an European voluptuary.

THE number of wives prescribed by his religion to the Hindoo, is, I believe, undefined. The Mahomedan is allowed four, with an indefinite number of concubines ; the circumstances of each individual commonly determine the number of his Zennana. A poor man seldom encumbers himself with the support of more than one ; and such marriages are in general the most prolific, as well as the most common. In such circumstances, too, mutual affection seems most frequent. It is pleasing to observe with what punctuality and cheerfulness those in the service of Europeans remit a little portion of their allowance for the support of their families, if absent. Their small mansions, though guarded with less strictness, it is probable contain a larger stock of virtue, than an expensive train of eunuchs can pre-

preserve in the splendid Zenanas of the prince. Hindoo women, of the lower ranks, especially such as are old or married, are not concealed with so much solicitude as those of the moormen; and from this circumstance, some have supposed, that the whole system of female confinement is borrowed by the Hindoos from that people*.

BUT from whatever origin this system of female treatment may be derived, there can hardly be a doubt of its unfavourable influence upon their understanding. Every part of their conduct and conversation indicates a deplorable weakness of intellect and sterility of ideas. Human nature is not always consistent; nor are the efforts of the mind always proportioned to our opportunities of exertion. Bred in scenes of the most voluptuous sensuality, these Indian ladies exhibit on certain occasions the most magnanimous and resolute exertion of fortitude of which history records any example. When a Hindoo of rank dies, or languishes in a state which indicates the approach of his dissolution, his favourite wife assumes the dreadful purpose of burning herself on the same funeral pile with her husband. This resolution is formed with deliberation, and is declared to be voluntary and fixed, three several times in the presence of relations. This is done that no advantage

* Vide Robertson's Hist. Disquisit. Append.; and Sketches of the Manners of the Hindoos.

advantage may seem to have been taken of the transient ebullition of frantic grief, and that the person devoting herself may have full time to reflect on the important sacrifice she is about to make to her affections, or to the customs of her country. No sooner is the purpose finally declared, than it is pronounced irrevocable; and the heroic lady walks with firmness and composure to the funeral pile, which she mounts, after having dealt out her last benedictions to her remaining friends. There is hardly an instance of any individual of these ladies, nursed in the lap of pleasure, having shrunk from this horrid trial of their fortitude, after it was undertaken; and incredible as it may seem, hardly any instance of their betraying symptoms of fear, hesitation, or pain.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

VARIOUS causes have been assigned for this unexampled fortitude, which perhaps is owing to the all-powerful effect of custom in this country, and the immediate hope of entering on a state of exquisite enjoyment. An Hindoo no more thinks of evading the customary rites of religion, than an European thinks of evading the unerring stroke of death. Its dictates appear to him the call of an invincible necessity, to which he submits without reluctance, because unavoidable; and without choice, because ordered by the Brahmins.

HINDOO NOTIONS WITH REGARD TO MARRIAGE, &c.

• • • • • • •

Calcutta, Jan. 1798.

THE marriages of the Hindoos have already been described ; they are here more universal, and contracted at an earlier period, than perhaps in any other part of the world. Parents are enjoined to marry their children before their eleventh year ; and if no progeny is the fruit of the first marriage, polygamy, which is allowed, but not generally practised, is then customary. The man marries another wife ; and in the event of a wife's death, a third marriage is allowed, because, according to the Hindoo faith, it is a matter of great consequence that every individual shall leave a representative who may perform the requisite ceremonies ; the fradha for the repose of his soul.

THIS

THIS is deemed a matter of so much importance, that a considerable part of a man's fortune is spent in celebrating festivals of this nature; and even where he possesses none, a pious Hindoo will rather borrow a sum, than omit so momentuous a duty. It is for this reason, that after a first, and perhaps a second wife, have been unfruitful, a man is permitted to adopt a son. This act confers all the advantages that result from that relation, and among this people it is performed with much solemnity.

THE Hindoo who has no children of his own, and resolves to adopt, assembles his relations, and those of the adoptive child. A large brass plate ^{Indira Gandhi National} † is placed upon the floor, on which the child stands, if sufficiently old; if not, he is supported by a Brahmin. The husband and wife then say, with a loud voice; “Having no son of our own, we wish to adopt the child which is now before you: we choose him for our son; and henceforward he has, and is to enjoy the same right to our fortune as if he were begotten by, and born by us; nor is he to expect any thing from his natural parents. In confirmation of this, we shall proceed to make our vows, if you who are present have nothing to object.” If those who assist give their approbation, the ceremony is completed by the husband and wife drinking water mixed with saffron, and pouring part of it on the feet

B b

of

† Sketches of the manners and customs of the Hindoos.

of the child. The transaction is recorded, and an attestation of it signed before the company. Nor is the right of this adopted son defeated by the natural offspring of the parents, should they afterwards have children. On the contrary, he retains the hereditary right, as first born; and the parties far from repenting of what they have done, are taught to believe that their fecundity is a blessing of Heaven, conferred on them, for thus introducing a stranger into their family.

As the Hindoo believes that the due performance of the usual rites to his manes, tends to mitigate his punishment in a future state, he is extremely anxious to have children to perform this duty: hence he deems sterility a severe misfortune, or rather the infliction of offended Deity. Indira Gandhi National Library On this principle, married women sometimes wear a small gold *Lingam** upon the neck or arm: on this account too, worship is paid this strange deity to obtain fecundity. "Those who dedicate themselves to the worship of this deity swear to observe inviolable chastity. They do not deprive themselves, like the priests of Atys, of the means of breaking their vows; but were it discovered that they had been unfaithful to them, the punishment

* An image of productive power, not to be explained. It did not occur to the legislators of the East, that any thing natural could be offensively obscene. The worship of the Lingam is therefore no proof of depravity of morals. Asiatic Researches, vol. 1st.

ment is death. They go naked; but being considered as sanctified persons, the women approach them without scruple, nor is it thought that their modesty should be offended at it. Husbands, whose wives are barren, solicit them to come to their houses, or send their wives to worship at the temples; and it is believed that the ceremonies observed on these occasions are productive of the desired effect *.”

HOWEVER discordant such rites may appear to European notions of decorum, they are by no means singular in the annals of superstition. The figure of Pallas was consecrated to Osiris and to Bacchus: at the festivals of the former it was carried by the women of Egypt, as the figure of Lingam is at present by the women of India.

THE ceremonies connected with marriage are extremely numerous, and must prove expensive to the poor. They commence in the infancy of the parties, and are again renewed when the bride arrives at the age of puberty: another set of observances are gone through when she becomes pregnant; others still when she passes the seventh month without accident; and lastly thanksgiving is returned to the gods for her safe delivery. Among the rich, some of these

* Sketches of the manners and customs of the Hindoos, vol. 2d, p. 213.

these festivals continue several days, and cost the parents immense sums.

ABOUT ten days after the birth of a child, it undergoes a rite somewhat resembling baptism. The relations are assembled; and if, after examining the planets, the Brahmin finds the omen favourable, he takes water from a number of pots provided for the purpose, and sprinkles the child's forehead, while he gives it a name; and the ceremony concludes with prayers to the gods, presents to the brahmins, and alms to the poor.

ONE of the most salutary of their institutions ordains, that all mothers shall suckle their own children; a duty from which nothing but sickness can exempt them. At a certain age each youth, belonging to the three superior castes, receives a string, which he wears round his neck, which indicates his rank; when this, which seems to correspond with the *toga virilis* of the Romans, is assumed, new ceremonies are observed, and fresh presents are made to the Brahmins. So deeply is superstition engrrafted on the whole system of life, that there is no age nor condition in which the priesthood does not profit by the piety or superstition of the people.

THE manner in which the greater number of the children of the poor are educated, has already been noticed. Those of better fortunes are taught by Brahmins, in a *pandal*, or room, made of beams and leaves

leaves of the palm tree. The youth sit on mats spread upon the floor. The books are made of leaves ; and the pen is usually a pointed instrument, with which the letters are engraved. The palm leaves used for this purpose are cut into stripes about an inch broad ; their surface is hard and smooth, so that the writing may be preserved almost for any period of time without being effaced. Until they have made some proficiency, the boys write upon the sand with the finger, as already described ; and in this way M. Ziegbalg, the celebrated missionary, who first gave a dictionary of the Malabar language, acquired his knowledge of that tongue. Arithmetic is added to the accomplishments of reading and writing, in the ordinary course of education, and the calculations are performed by the means of pebbles or small shells.

AFTER this previous discipline, the Hindoo youth is prepared to enter upon his professional duty ; but of this he has no choice, every individual adhering to that of his family *.—Of the education of the native women, we are but little informed. Their range of duty in society is so limited, that the years of their infancy are probably spent in learning the ceremonies of their religion, and a few domestic du-

ties,

* This peculiarity is noticed by Diod. Sicul.—*Non enim fas est, militem agrum colere, nec philosophare artificem.*—Lib. 2d. cap. 10th.

ties, in which we see the females afterwards engaged. Dres and finery, those copious sources of female study, are here hardly known ; at least they are always uniform, and so extremely limited as to leave no room for invention.

It is not the practice of the Hindoos to give any dowry on the marriage of a daughter ; on the contrary, when a girl is demanded of her father, and his consent obtained, a present is made to him by the intended husband, as a token that she thereafter belongs to him. This probably was originally a purchase ; as was the case among the early Romans, who were in the ancient law said to acquire them *coëmptione*, as they did afterwards by the ceremonies of confarreation.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE confinement of the Hindoo women, and the general purity of their manners, give little room for dissolving marriage by divorce. Death is the usual manner in which that connection ceases ; and here it was formerly a received opinion, that one of the wives of a great man should burn herself with her deceased husband. The influence of the Mahomedan government, and still more that of the British, has tended to discourage a practice so repugnant to humanity and reason. Every argument of dissuasion has been used by them, and frequently with effect. A Rajah in one of the British provinces having been dangerously ill, it was communicated to the commanding officer, that his wife, in the event of his

his death, intended to burn herself upon the same pile. The Rajah had an only child about five years of age. The European commander built his argument on this circumstance; and dispatched a native to represent to the widow, after the decease of the Rajah, the danger to which her son must be exposed, if left to the doubtful care of ambitious relations, who had often attempted to disturb the peace even of his father: that to live for his sake would be preferring an important and natural duty to an unnatural and imaginary one; and that by discharging the office of a tender and prudent mother, she would best prove her affection and respect for the memory of her deceased husband. He was likewise desired to signify to the Brahmins, that should they attempt to proceed to the ceremony, an officer who commanded a neighbouring garrison, would prevent it. The fear of some public act of violence prevailed with the priests, and not the arguments; with these they were highly offended, and even affected to treat them with much contempt. The Rajah died; and the widow being a woman of sense and merit, was afterwards of infinite use to his son.

HAVING thus a claim to the protection and good offices of the person, who, it may be said, had forced her to live, she through his means enjoyed a degree of respect and consideration, which, according to the customs of the country, she must otherwise have lost. She obtained from him several marks of indulgence
for

for her son ; and in one of her letters she expresses herself to the following effect :

“ WHEN you recollect that I am his mother, and that you prevailed upon me to dishonour myself for his sake, you will cease to be offended at me for soliciting this favour for him. You forced a duty upon me which does not belong to our sex ; if I fail in the execution of it, I shall be the reproach of all who are allied to me ; if I succeed, and this country flourish, my offence may be forgotten : my happiness depends upon you ; on mine, depends that of many ; consider this and determine *.”

SOME few of the Hindoos instead of burning, bury the dead ; as the Mahomedans. For this we have the authority of several travellers. It has not come within my observation ; but Bernier, after mentioning women who burn themselves, says ; “ This conduct, however cruel and barbarous, is exceeded by what the Brahmins do in some other parts of India : for instead of burning the women who wish to die with their husbands, they inter them alive up to the chin, and then two or three fall upon them to choak them.”

NOTWITHSTANDING the acknowledged temperance of the Hindoos, there are among them few instances

* Vide Sketches, &c. vol. 2. p. 32.

of extraordinary longevity. Even those who are permitted to eat meat, are enjoined to do it sparingly. Their meals are only two; a circumstance favourable to health, but which seems to give them a less decided advantage over the Mussulmans, than might be imagined.

EVERY Hindoo believes, that after death his soul continues to exist, and to animate some being more or less dignified according to his past life; and that after undergoing a number of metamorphoses, sufficient for its purification, it will be absorbed into the divine essence. Some, it is said, "believe that their souls are sent back to the spot where their bodies were burnt, there to wait till new bodies are prepared for their reception. This was one of the opinions of Plato, which seems to have been adopted by the primitive Christians; for an ordinance of the church of Rome forbids having lights, or making merriments in the church yard at night, lest they should disturb the souls that might come thither." It seems also to have been a notion of the Jews, that the human soul animated several bodies successively, and that a man in the present life might suffer ~~for~~ the punishment of guilt contracted in a previous state of existence: Hence the question put to Christ, "Was it this man or his parents who sinned, that he was *born* blind?"

THE dress of the inferior part of the natives, has already been noticed; that of the higher ranks does

not exclude magnificence, nor elegance. Both Mahomedans and Hindoos of condition wear a Jama, or gown of fine muslin, neatly fitted to the body in the upper part, and floating loosely from the middle, as low as the feet. The former ties his Jama on the right side of the breast, and the latter on the left: over this is sometimes worn a short close vest of worked cotton, or silk, braided with small flowers of silver or gold. The turban, the girdle, and the slippers, are the most highly ornamented parts of dress. These are not only embroidered with gold and silver, but are sometimes adorned with precious stones. The present Nabob of Bengal, on days of ceremony, displays an assortment of jewels and pearls on his dress to a considerable amount. Quintus Curtius has, in a few words, given a pretty accurate description of the dress of a Hindoo Rajah. “*Vestis erat auro purpuraque distincta, quæ etiam crura velabat: aureis soliis inferuerat gemmas: lacerti quoque et brachia margaritis ornata erant. Pendebant ex auribus insignes candore et magnitudine lapilli *.*”

THE dress of the women, does not vary more than that of the men; the chief distinction consisting in the fineness of the cloth, and the value of their jewels. They in general wear a close jacket, which only extends downwards to cover the breasts, but

com-

* Lib. 9. cap. 1.

completely shews their form. It has tight sleeves, which reach about halfway from the shoulder to the elbow; and a narrow border round all the edges painted or embroidered in different colours. A piece of white cotton cloth wrapped several times round the loins, and falling down over the legs to the ankle, serves as a petticoat. A wide piece of muslin is thrown over the left shoulder, which, passing under the right arm, is crossed round the middle; and being tucked under the cloth wrapped round the loins, hangs down to the feet. One end of this cloth is sometimes spread over the head, and serves for a veil. The hair is rolled up into a knot upon the back part of the head, where it is fastened with a gold pin, and ornamented with jewels *.

THOSE mental accomplishments, so highly prized in the ladies of Europe, are avoided by the Hindoos, as injurious to that simplicity of manners, and decorous behaviour, which they imagine render them estimable in their families: few of them are taught to read or write. The dancing women compose a separate class, and live under the protection of government according to their own particular rules. Such of them as are destined to be the votaries of pleasure, are taught every qualification which they imagine may tend to captivate and entertain the other

* Sketches of the manners and customs of the Hindoos, vol. 2. p. 46.

other sex. In the code of Hindoo laws there are some provisions made in their favour.

THE dress of these women is various and fantastical; they generally wear, besides the dress of other females, a sort of loose drawers like trousers; they are subject to no restraint either in eating or drinking, excepting the article of beef. Their ankles and toes are decorated with gold or silver rings, to which they sometimes attach small bells.



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

EFFECTS

EFFORTS OF EUROPEANS IN THE CONVERSION OF THE
NATIVES.

Calcutta, Dec. 1796.

EVERY European nation that has hitherto acquired territorial possessions in India, as if convinced of the destructive influence of the Brahminical system on knowledge, industry, and virtue, have laboured with considerable perseverance and zeal in order to rescue its votaries from that ignorance and degradation in which this superstition has involved the great body of the people.

MISSIONARIES have been sent out from Europe to reclaim the natives from their error, both on the part of government, and of individuals; but no fruit has been reaped from their labours, in any degree corresponding to the hopes of the pious, or the liberal contributions of the parties concerned. The Portuguese, in the first fervour of their zeal, engaged in this undertaking

dertaking with an alacrity that seemed worthy of its importance. Their worship, by the number of its showy rites, being in some degree assimilated to that of their own country, might appear well suited to captivate the attention of this simple people, though it might not greatly enlarge the understanding; yet have the effects produced in India by all their endeavours invariably proved inadequate to the expectations formed by the projectors in Europe.

THE great St Francis de Xavier himself, who was long regarded as the apostle of the East, and who was believed by many to have wrought miracles in this field of pious industry, has left but scanty proofs of his success. Though the number of his nominal converts was so considerable as to obtain for him the honour of canonization after his death, yet it cannot be affirmed that he has added much to the knowledge, industry or virtue, of the poor pariahs who listened with devout admiration to his discourses.

HIS residence in India, during a period of ten years preceding 1552, is said to have been signalised by a number of conversions in Goa, Comorin, Malacca and Japan; but the present state of christianity in these parts, affords but small corroboration of the preternatural gifts that have been ascribed to this great man. The annals of the Portuguese church in the East, in this period, are as frequently disgraced by credulity and bigotry, as they were in the parent state.

THE Dutch, though that nation has been long more distinguished for its avidity in the pursuits of commerce and the accumulation of wealth, than for zeal in disseminating religion, has not left the task untried of converting the natives of its dominions in Asia. Chaplains have been regularly established, not only in Batavia; but at Chinsura and Calcapore in Bengal. At the former settlement, I have not heard of their success; but in the two latter, the circumstances of the surrounding inhabitants, being the same with those of our own, their labours have been equally unprofitable.

A society of well disposed persons in Britain collected a fund many years ago, and sent out missionaries; and though that establishment still subsists in Calcutta, no conversions of any moment have ever dignified its labours. It has for some time been united with a Danish society, formed upon a similar plan, and with the same views: after thus combining their efforts and their resources, the mission is at present in a more languishing state than ever. An elegant church has been erected, but none of the natives, even of the lowest cast, have as far as I can learn, ever condescended to come under its roof: the edifice is therefore used as one of the ordinary places of worship for the English inhabitants. Excepting a few of the pariah tribe in the neighbourhood of Madras, who are sometimes seen listening to the discourses of the Missionaries, with much greater appearance of wonder, than of intelligence, the apostles of the east

cannot

cannot boast of having gained to their society, even those unfortunate Hindoos, who have been debarred all communication with the rest of mankind.

THESE consequences are the unavoidable result of the labour of conversion, as it has been hitherto carried on in India ; and by every person acquainted with the situation of the Hindoos, they must have been foreseen. Neither the zeal of our Missionaries, nor that of their employers, has been directed by knowledge.

WHEN the Spaniards are said to have converted thousands of the native Americans in a day ; and their clergy to have administered the ceremony of baptism to such multitudes, that they were no longer able to lift their hands, their enthusiasm imposed upon themselves, and led them to impose upon the world. These new converts to christianity, could in no sense merit that honourable appellation. In order to their being christians, it was first requisite to make them reasonable creatures, a title to which savages with hardly a single intellectual idea, have surely but little claim.

THE first fruits of the American vineyard, were therefore, useless, by being premature. The acquiescence of the simple convert, in doctrines to him incomprehensible, could be attended with no alteration either of belief, or of conduct; no additional light was conveyed to his understanding, nor any new

new motive supplied to influence him in the practice of duty. His name and appellation were alone changed; and if there be any virtue in charms or names, he was a complete believer from his childhood.

WERE, therefore, the whole body of the multitude of Hindostan, from caprice, or views of interest, at once to abandon their system in the present state of their intellectual improvement, the circumstance might be a triumph to the missionaries: but it could by no means be construed into a victory to truth; nor would the number of real christians be augmented by this apostacy. In their present ignorance, not of religion, but of every moral precept, to lay before them the sublime doctrines of christianity, is to violate its prohibitions, by "casting pearls before swine."

THAT mental degradation, and universal ignorance which I have already noticed as characterising the lower ranks of the Hindoos, must be previously removed before they can either comprehend, or profit by any religious doctrine whatever. When therefore the missionary pitches his tent, and harangues them in the lofty strains of *his* gospel eloquence, his labours have been followed by effects suited to their prudence. In Europe, where the circumstances of the people are not attended to, or perhaps not generally known, much regret is expressed at this uniform want of success in the work of conversion. You are surprised

that miracles are not wrought, in an age in which you profess to believe they have ceased.

IN his present state of ignorance, and under the terror of excommunication from the Brahmins, by whom all his opinions are implicitly guided, the conversion of a Hindoo may certainly be regarded, as a thing somewhat miraculous. To suppose him able to comprehend the doctrines of christianity, and at liberty to embrace them, while no converts have been made by them, during a period of near two hundred years, in which they have been preached ; would be to assert that they were inferior in value, or supported by less evidence than the doctrines of that system to which he continues to adhere. The doctrines of christianity are addressed to us “as wise men,” who are commanded to <sup>di “Ganesh” Indian
Centre for the Arts</sup> judge what they say : it is therefore no objection to them, that there may be a degree of ignorance below their comprehension, and a degree of superstitious fear, which their allurements but ill understood, cannot overcome.

THERE must, in every mind, be some degree of information, and some strength of intellect, before a preference can be given to any arguments, or any system of opinions to another—Over total ignorance, truth has no power.

IN Greece and Rome when the pagan system gave way to that of christianity, a large portion of the people were capable of comprehending its doctrines, and of

of examining the evidence by which they are supported. A general knowledge both of the one and the other, were diffused before their reception. The circumstances of the people, were almost in every respect the reverse of what they are in India. They were neither attached to their theological system, nor its practical rites by any insurmountable prejudice.

IT was a fabric constructed in a rude age ; and the increase of knowledge, in subsequent times, had widely exposed its grossness and imperfection. Horace, Juvenal, and Lucian, had lashed the absurdities of the system, and the characters of its gods, with equal freedom as those of their fellow subjects : and before their time, the worship of other gods or performing different rites was rather deemed a mark of superior piety, than of any malignity of heart against the established deities of the state. When therefore a system of more rational piety, or finer morals, was publicly announced, it met with a fair discussion ; and the empire of Jupiter was vanquished by that of truth.

THE most dignified characters in the state who were chosen to perform the functions of religion, discharged their office with outward gravity, and much inward indifference : they beheld with little aversion the advancement of a new system, from which they dreaded no evil. There was no numerous hereditary priesthood to oppose its introduction ; or who foresaw in its establishment the downfall of their order. All these circumstances, in the condition of the natives of India,

are

are either different, or diametrically opposite. Here no collision of opinion has ever awakened their curiosity or sharpened their intellects. No books ever reach their hands, to convey information; not even a newspaper is printed in the native language; and, if it were, only a few of the higher ranks could peruse it. Of all abstract ideas, the multitude is almost entirely destitute: to a people in this state, it is in vain to propose abstract doctrines for discussion. There is hardly any so simple, as they shall understand, and hardly any too gross for their belief.

UNFORTUNATELY for them, the Brahmins will not allow them to exercise the small degree of reason they may possess. Any departure from the customary rites, is held up as of all things the most sinful, and not to be expiated by the severest punishment. Thus the attachment of the Hindoo to his faith and worship, is guarded equally by his ignorance and his fears: and it is the care of the priesthood, who are here the sole guides of opinion, to keep him under the compleat dominion of both. They watch to preserve ignorance, not to disseminate knowledge, every inlet to which is guarded as closely as the avenues of death.

FROM these causes no degree of success has ever signalized the labours of European missionaries in any part of India. They seem, at last, weary of so fruitless an attempt, and have either desisted from the pursuit, or carry it on with a listless indifference,

which

which gives no countenance either to the wishes of the pious, or the expectations of the missionaries. On the Malabar coast, and in the Mysore, some of the lower classes have attended the missionaries, and have yielded a kind of assent to their doctrines, if assent can be given to what is not understood.

AT different periods, the fervor of zeal, or the effusions of humanity, have broke forth, and produced new efforts in favour of the natives : but these transient exertions have often languished before they reached so distant a scene of action ; or they have been soon overborne by that indolence and dissipation which so frequently characterises Europeans in the East. There has lately been devoted to this service twenty thousand pounds, a larger sum than any yet contributed by any individual : three missionaries, supported by the interest of this fund, are intended to be sent to Benares, the great storehouse of the Brahmin superstition ; there to combat its usurpations at the very center of their power. Among the best informed part of our society, no sanguine expectations are entertained, that this project will terminate more successfully than those which have preceded it.

WHILE viewing the great mosque at Benares, I received a letter from a clergyman in London, acquainting me that this project was for the time laid aside, from a refusal of the Court of Directors to allow the missionaries to depart for India. They sus-

pected that the persons chosen would mingle politics with religion. No wise man can regret that these persons were prevented from attempting a task which has uniformly disappointed all their predecessors.

THE best informed persons here are fully of opinion, that to increase the influence of pure religion among the natives, you must begin by improving their knowledge; which can only be effected by instructing the youth. Happily the natives have no aversion to commit their children to the tuition of Europeans: they are rather ambitious that they should acquire the accomplishments of reading and writing English, as the means of enabling them to prosecute some lucrative branch of trade, or of introducing them as upper servants in the employ of the British. The Hindoos will not indeed allow their children to eat or sleep under the same roof with Europeans; but they suffer them to remain at a day school, which, for these purposes, is sufficient.

So much is this their desire, that there are several of their children now taught by Europeans; and many more by such of the natives themselves as understand a little English. Where neither of these opportunities can be afforded, there are many instances of spelling books in our language being found in their houses, and copies for writing, purchased by those who imagine they may acquire the branches of knowledge by their own private application. The present

present assessor of the taxes, paid by the natives in the town of Calcutta, has not only personally witnessed all these particulars, but has been engaged in the instruction of the children of some natives of distinction.

THE Hindoos of all ranks are extremely averse to part with their money, except to the Brahmins : the teachers appointed behoved, therefore, to be provided with a salary to be increased by the contribution of such natives as could afford to pay for the instruction of their child. In every other case, the benefit of knowledge would be more acceptable to the natives by being conferred gratuitously.

IN this manner the children of half a million of people in Calcutta might be taught to read and write : and a foundation laid for putting into their hands plain instructive books of morality and natural religion : and he pays Christianity a bad compliment, who imagines, that it will not recommend itself to such as are tolerably acquainted with these subjects.

THERE has always been much difficulty in finding sober and diligent Europeans, willing to confine their prospects to the painful drudgery of teaching in India. The task of instructing the native children might probably prove the most irksome of any. The prospect of making a large fortune in the cotton, silk, or indigo business, however uncertain, has always

ways sufficient attractions to withdraw persons of education from a line of life unjustly deemed unimportant and degrading.

In the present circumstances, this obstacle could easily be surmounted in Calcutta. The children born to Europeans by native women, are every year increasing in number, and employment for them will soon become a matter of serious attention: they are at present excluded by the regulations, from any appointment in the service of the Company, civil or military. Their education, and their limited ambition, seem to point them out as the most proper persons for the tuition of the native children; while their numbers are more than sufficient to supply every appointment of this kind, which either the benevolence, piety, or zeal of the present age appear likely to suggest. The contemplation of a measure of this kind, is the more pleasing; because if it shall ever be adopted, it will place in a useful profession a numerous class of unfortunate youth, who for no fault of their own, have been abandoned by their progenitors on one side; and on account of their Christian education, excluded from the society of those on the other. Had one half of the sum been bestowed in this manner, which has been expended in haranguing the ignorant multitude, by still more ignorant missionaries, very different consequences might have been the result: at all events, the contributors to the measure, would have the satisfaction of having the exercise of their benevolence, approved by that of their reason.

THE MAHOMMEDAN FESTIVAL OF MOHURRUM.

Calcutta, Jan. 1798.

THE ferocity and enthusiasm which characterises the Mahomedans in this country, is particularly displayed during the festival of Mohurrum. This is the name of the first month of their year, during the first ten days of which all the followers of the sect of Ali, lament the death of Imaum Hossein, the second son of that prophet, by Fatima.

ON the death of Ali, who was assassinated, a different house succeeded to the Caliphat; in the reign of Yezzed, the second of his family, the inhabitants of Cufa sent an embassy to Hossein at Medina, to request him to assume the government, and to assure him of their support. Hossein, upon this invitation, set out from Cufa with his family, and a considerable number of troops. Yezzed receiving intelligence of

his march, dispatched after him an army of 10,000 men, which occupying the ground between him and the river Euphrates, cut off his supply of water. This event, in the sultry climate of Mesopotamia, where life even with that necessary article, can scarcely be supported against the excessive heat, brought on the crisis of his fate. His adherents terrified at the prospect of perishing with thirst, forsook him in such numbers, that he soon found himself at the head of only a small retinue of seventy-two persons, chiefly his relations.

AFTER suffering various distresses, and encountering several skirmishes, this small, but determined band, was surrounded on the tenth of Mohurrum by the army of Yezzed, and entirely cut to pieces. In this little troop, Asher, the infant son of Hossein, was killed by an arrow, in the arms of his father: and Hossein himself at last fell, exhausted with fatigue, and fainting under numberless wounds. His tent was plundered, his women insulted, and his head was carried to Damascus, the residence of his rival Yezzed.

ALL these events are represented by the Mussulmans and their priests during the Mohurrum; on the first day of which the latter mount the pulpits, and begin the recital of the life and actions of Ali, and his sons Haffun and Hossein, describing particularly the melancholy circumstances that attended the fate of the latter, with all the pathos of which their elo-

eloquence is susceptible. The effect of these harangues on the enthusiastic multitude is remarkable ; they strike their breasts with frantic violence ; they weep ; they exclaim, ah Hossein, *Heif az Hossein*, alas for Hossein ! Some parts of this tragical story are in verse, and recited or sung in a doleful cadence.

DURING each day of the solemnity, some particular act of the story is represented by people selected for personating the different characters concerned. Effigies, and large machines are carried in procession through the streets : crowds follow, personating the armies of Yezzed, and of Hossein, each under their respective banners and ensigns. One pageant represents the Caliph Yezzed seated on a magnificent throne, and surrounded by his guards : every part of the machinery, though constructed merely for the occasion, is burnished with silver and gold ; and in point of grandeur, and splendid scenery, the whole exhibition probably surpasses the showy processions in the Roman Catholic countries of Europe.

ON some occasions, the sacred pigeons, which the pious Mussulmans believe carried the news of Hossein's death to Medina, are represented with their beaks dipped in blood, as a confirmation of their intelligence : on other days the horses, on which Hossein and his brother Abbas, are supposed to have rode, are represented to the people, and are painted

as covered with wounds, and stuck full of arrows. By these representations the zeal of the multitude is raised to a degree of ardor approaching to phrenzy; some voluntarily inflict wounds upon themselves; some engage in conflicts with daggers and swords, and seem to court death: many in the course of the Mohurrum are slain; and as often as this happens, it is their uniform belief, that the souls of the deceased are instantaneously wafted to Paradise. The pious Mahomedan, it is said, abstains almost entirely from water during the ten days of this solemnity, in commemoration of the dreadful sufferings endured by this Saint from the want of that element; many abstain from the bath, and from changing their cloaths during that period of sorrow. On the tenth day the coffins of those slain in battle are brought forth, stained with blood; on them are laid the scimitar and turban of the deceased, adorned with feathers. After the corps have been solemnly interred, the priests mount the pulpit, and again read the tragical history; and the whole service is concluded with pious curses and imprecations upon the Caliph Yezzed, and all his adherents.

HOSSEIN.—This holy Imaum is believed not only to have been a saint, but a martyr; and throughout the whole history he is dignified with the appellation of *Sheheed*, (martyr). It is their firm belief also, that he foreknew his destiny, but suffered a voluntary death, as an expiation for the sins of all who believe in his name, and are the faithful followers of Ali.

Ali. All, therefore, who truly lament the death of their Imaum, or piously commemorate his sufferings, it is held, shall find acceptance at the day of judgement, and the remission of their sins. So great was his power, it is asserted, that had Hossein exercised the divine energy communicated to him, the whole world could not have prevailed against him; but on his part his sufferings and death was voluntary, that his followers might obtain everlasting life. Hence among the followers of Ali, it is an essential point of faith, that at the day of judgement, Fatima, the mother of the two saints Hassun and Hossein, will present herself before the throne of God, with the head of the latter in one hand, and the heart of the former in the other, demanding absolution and pardon in their name, for the followers of Ali; nor is it doubted that God will grant her request.

THE splendor and magnificence with which this solemnity is observed in Persia*, and throughout Hindostan, constitutes an article of heavy expence to individuals. The Nabob of Bengal last year expended on the pageantry of this ceremony what would have been an independent fortune to a moderate man; and even the common people, his nominal subjects, discovered a liberality in their contributions which they never display on any other occasion.

A

* Franklin's observations on a tour to Persia.

A ceremony so splendid and expensive, accompanied with a degree of zeal far more ardent than they have witnessed among themselves, fails not to attract the notice of Europeans. They generally turn out on their first visit to India, to see the spectacle and combats during the Mohurrum; and no one who feels an interest in human happiness, can be an unconcerned spectator. The pious must lament, that so much zeal should be directed to a wrong object; and that a faith so lively should be unsupported by truth. Every man, friendly to the interests of virtue, must regret that future happiness, or the favour of heaven, should be held up as attainable by other means than the practice of piety or morality.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

In a political view, the celebration of the Mohurrum for so long a period as ten days, must be regarded as pernicious to industry, and expensive to the people; while the gentle and humane affections, which every good government should cherish, must be weakened or effaced by the annual representation of massacre and bloodshed.

RELIGIOUS RITES.

Mirzapour, Dec. 12, 1797.



IN order to have a more complete knowledge of the practical rites in such universal respect in this country, I this day went to hear prayers from a celebrated devotee of that class, called Faqueers among the native Mahomedans, and Saniassee by the Hindoos. The profession somewhat resembles that of the Mendicant Friars in Europe: it is assumed by all the classes as well as the Brahmins; and seems to be adopted chiefly from indolence and pride operating on weak minds. This religious man has long attracted the veneration of the ignorant; and the means he practises for this purpose seem perfectly suited to operate upon minds of their slender and dark complexion.

His face was painted red, interspersed with white patches; his body covered with robes adorned with shining shells and rings; his whole countenance and manner indicated a mixture of vanity and frantic pride which defies language to express. He discovered evident marks of satisfaction at our coming to visit him; and seemed to entertain no doubt that we felt much veneration for his sacred person. He offered up prayers to the Supreme Being, in our favour, if those howlings and frightful gesticulations which he exhibited, can merit that appellation. He held several holy manuscripts of Sanscrit Scripture in his hands, which he frequently pretended to read, but to us he appeared totally blind, and is said to have never been capable even in his youth to read that language. His long beard was of immense bulk, and plaited with additional hair, so as to tie in wreaths about his neck.

THIS frantic votary of superstition constantly sat in a small inclosure resembling a pig sty; and opposite to him there stood a small altar covered with various images of the gods, who are the objects of popular worship. Behind him stood a sacred cow, which the piety of the natives enabled him to keep well fed, and in good order. In his company there are always two or three natives, who seemed to feel peculiar admiration of his sanctity, and who, it is said, were receiving initiatory instruction, as a preparation for embracing the same profession. Vows of abstinence, and of celibacy, are usually taken on entering

entering into this holy order, which appear to have been the original of the monastic vows so well known in Europe. Indeed, the corruptions of Christianity among every ignorant people, assume a strong resemblance to the superstitious observances of the Hindoos. There is in both the same ignorance and contempt of moral duties; the same veneration for images, holy water, and frivolous rites; the same discrimination of days, of food; and a similar multiplicity of objects of worship.

THE Faqueer, of whom I now speak, on being offered money, displays anger, and a contempt for that article, too marked to be sincere: his reasons for refusing it, were however sufficiently plausible: ‘What need, said he, have I of money? I no sooner appear among the people, than they piously supply me with every thing I want; I am as independent as a king.’ When his small store of subsistence is exhausted, he falls forth from his cell into the public marketplace, uttering the frantic gesticulations and cries of his piety. There the multitude crowd around, and give small contributions of money and provisions; and so deep is their ignorance and delusion, that this is a source of supply which he can never exhaust. It is extremely unfortunate, that the industry and wealth of the people should thus be subjected to a continual waste, which, in its effects, can only contribute to confirm their ignorance, and strengthen the ties of slavery, by adding to them the bonds of superstition. Hardly any class of the people is pro-

hibited from embracing this idle and pernicious life ; and while indolence and pride are predominant features in every character of Asia, they must operate as powerful motives for its adoption *.

SEVERAL young persons attended this religious cell, with a view of initiation to its rites ; they are distinguished by their perfect nakedness, and the exposure of those parts of which modesty enjoins the concealment. Their numbers are in some of the upper provinces so great, that the patient and credulous liberality of the natives is inadequate to their support ; from want, therefore, they issue from their retreats in the woods and mountains, to the annoyance of all industry in the district ; and their suppression by military force is one of the most frequent and arduous efforts of the police.

THEIR number even here is considerable ; but as they generally are single individuals, they make few violent attacks upon property. Adjoining the cell, which I have attempted to describe, there is another devotee seen sitting in the open air upon the ruin of an old Hindoo temple, which has been undermined by the Ganges. He also is in *puris naturalibus*, only his body is washed over with a composition of ashes and cow dung ; and he is remarkable for a vow that he has made of living upon ashes as his food. This

* Their number has been estimated at 110,000.

This astonishing violation of the dictates of nature, it is said, he faithfully adheres to, only using the necessary precaution of mixing up his ashes with a little sweet milk. Sitting in sackcloth and ashes, was a well known expression of sorrow and repentance among the Jews: how far they may have been indebted to the Hindoos for its origin, I do not pretend to determine. It is certain that many of the customs of Hindostan nearly resemble those of ancient Egypt and Judea; and the conjecture that these nations, and after them the Europeans, have derived much of their knowledge, and many customs from India, is daily receiving establishment from new facts and resemblances, discovered in this country.

Indira Gandhi National
Museum Library

THE antiquity of the Hindoo religion, learning, and civil institutions, is, I believe, at present contested by no person of information; while the extent of their attainments, and the value of their acquisitions is constantly controverted upon more solid grounds. Hardly a single art in Europe has derived its improvement from our knowledge of India. The religion, astronomy, jurisprudence, and moral science of the country is daily becoming better understood, but nothing has yet been found superior, or even equal to our own. And it is farther to be remarked, that every thing valuable in knowledge is here confined to the few. From every thing like science, the vulgar are wholly excluded, as a boon to them uncommunicable. To the rational comforts

of religion, they are utter strangers, unless the observance of the painful ceremonies of their superstition by soothing their terrified imagination, or gratifying their religious pride, can come under that idea.

The exaggerations of Oriental attainments in science and learning, which so often appear in print, are to be ascribed to that admiration and surprise with which men view monuments of ancient taste and literature. Contemptible as the progress of Hindoo science and religious knowledge has been, when compared to the duration of that people, they are still entitled to our indulgence and respect. For, whatever reason we may have to regard the religion we profess, as more dignified in its origin, and more rational in its precepts, we ought not to look upon the sincere believers of another, with severity or contempt. To hate or despise any people, because they do not profess the same faith with ourselves, or because they have not made the same attainments in knowledge, is to violate the humane and liberal spirit of our own system; which enjoins charity and benevolence to all. If, of them to whom much has been given, much shall be required; forbearance and mutual love must be expected from Christians on the most equitable grounds; because these duties constitute a fundamental part of their religion.

In my different strictures on the Hindoo manners, I have purposely avoided any discussion of their abstract theological tenets, and their similarity or difference

ference with those of Egypt and Greece. These enquiries have ever appeared the most fruitless and unprofitable in the whole field of science. To pursue the absurd fictions and puerile wanderings of the human mind in rude ages upon this mysterious subject, is a difficult task ; and though attainable, is perhaps the least useful upon which the mind can be employed. We are as yet too little acquainted with Sanscrit books, to determine what was the state of religion in Hindostan in the earlier ages ; and when a more complete knowledge of these writings is attained, we shall probably discover a few well known sentiments disguised by a mixture of absurdity and error ; and shall find that the Hindoos, as well as every other people, have, by the improvements of science, reached the knowledge of some useful truths, while in other instances, they have been led astray by its illusions.

IT is comfortable to reflect, that amidst so deep a gloom of ignorance and superstition, in which so many millions of our fellow creatures in this part of the world are involved, there should be found so little subversive of society, and so much that seems to promote its ends. Human victims to appease divine wrath, are not now often sacrificed in any part of Hindostan, whatever might have been practised in ruder periods. The offerings made at the temples, consist of money, fruit, flowers, rice, incense,

incense, and spices, with the offering * made at the new and full moon, on account of the dead, called the *sradha*.

In their sacred writings, mention is made of the sacrifice of the Horse, of the White Elephant, of the Bull, and even of Man : but the animal to be sacrificed must, to be acceptable, have so many peculiarities, that it can never be found. This humane commentary of the Brahmins precludes the exercise of cruelty †.

IT is fortunate, that in a country where the great body of the people are occupied by the rites of a worship so gross and illiberal, a few should retain a knowledge of the Supreme Being, and worship him without the intervention of images, in a manner suited to his nature. The followers of the Nar-ganny Pooja, or worship of the invisible, are deists ; men of cultivated minds, on whom the gross fables of the Brahmins have no hold. One of them, a person of rank and property in Calcutta, informed me, that several men of rank and education were of that persuasion, and acknowledged no deities but the Creator and Governor of the world ; whose service was the observance of the laws of morality. In every country, the progress of knowledge moderates,

and

* Vide Sketches of the manners of the Hindoos.

† Asiatic Researches, Sir W. Jones' Discourses.

and sometimes overpowers superstition among the superior ranks.

THOUGH superstition mixes with every action of an Hindoo's life, yet there are stated times for public worship, at which the people, after having bathed, resort to the temple. When they come from the Tank, they leave their slippers on its bank, and are admitted to a vestibule before the temple, where the idols are placed. There amidst the profound reverence of the people, the Brahmins perform the ceremonies of worship; whilst the dancing women perform their exercise in the court, singing at the same time the praises of the divinity, to the sound of various instruments.

THE Hindoos, in the exercise of individual and private devotion, as well as public, sound a bell, and blow a conch or shell. There too, they have an idol of gold, or silver, or wood, placed upon a throne; a censer is kept continually burning. The idol is washed in a metal bason; and cups containing rice, fruit, and sweetmeats, are placed before it; in the mean time, the worshipper is repeating his prayers; and the Brahmin, after having marked the forehead of the idol with a colouring substance, imposes a similar one on the worshipper. Hence, in walking along the streets, you meet the people with marks of various shapes and colours, according to the sect and tribe of each. The ceremony

ceremony concludes by dividing the fruit and sweet-meats among those present, and carefully wrapping up the idol and his throne, which are laid up till another act of worship is to be performed.



OF

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

OF THE CRUELTY OF THE MAHOMMEDANS IN INDIA.

• • • • •

Allahabad,

1798.

THE mussulman, probably owes his ignorance of all polite learning, more to the exclusive zeal and bigotry of his religious system, than to any defect of nature. All knowledge but that of the Coran; to him appears not only profane, but heretical and sinful. Those who differed from the all-sufficient system of his faith, were deemed not merely contemptible, but odious: thence his pious enthusiasm decreed war and destruction against mankind, and the recorded knowledge of past ages. A competent knowledge of the arts and sciences, besides its intrinsic value, and the immediate advantages it confers upon society, generally bestows also its best ornaments. Generosity, politeness and humanity, have always been the attendants, if not the effects of literature.

*Scilicet ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.*

HAD the Roman poet lived in our days, he might have illustrated his maxim by the history of the Moguls : their ignorance and contempt of learning has ever been accompanied with cruelty and barbarity to the vanquished. When that people, under Zengis, had subdued the northern provinces of China, it was seriously proposed, not in the hour of victory and passion, but in calm deliberate council, to exterminate all the inhabitants of that populous country. The execution of this horrid design was averted, by the dextrous management of a mandarin, who engaged their avarice in behalf of his countrymen, by representing the immense riches these provinces would yield by the produce of their manufactures.

“ IN the cities of Asia, says Mr Gibbon *, the inhuman abuse of the rights of war, was exercised with a regular form of discipline : The inhabitants who had submitted to their discretion, were ordered to evacuate their houses, and to assemble in some plain adjacent to the city ; when a division was made of the vanquished into three parts. The first class consisted of the soldiers of the garrison, and of the young men capable of bearing arms ; and their fate was instantly decided : They were either enlisted among the Moguls, or they were massacred on the spot, who, with pointed spears, and bended bows, had formed a circle round the captive multitude. The second class composed

* Decline and fall of the Roman empire, vol. 3d, p. 367.

composed of the young and beautiful women, of the artificers of every rank and profession, of the more wealthy or honourable citizens, from whom a private ransom might be expected, was distributed in equal and proportionable lots. The remainder, whose life or death was alike useless to the conquerors, were permitted to return to the city ; which in the mean time had been stripped of its valuable furniture ; and a tax was imposed on those wretched inhabitants for the indulgence of breathing their native air.

“ SUCH was the behaviour of the Moguls, when they were not conscious of any extraordinary rigour. But the most casual provocation, the slightest motive of caprice or convenience, (he might have added zeal) often provoked them to massacre a whole people. The ruin of some flourishing cities was executed with such unrelenting perseverance, that, according to their own expression, horses might run without stumbling on the ground where they once stood. The three great capitals Khorassan, Maru, Neifabour, and Herat, were destroyed by the armies of Zengis ; and the exact account, which was taken of the slain, amounted to 4,347,000 persons.”

Timur, the founder of the dynasty lately on the throne, was educated in a less barbarous age, and in the profession of the Mahomedan faith ; but the zeal of the missionary seems to have silenced the dictates of humanity. His profest admirer and historian, Sherefeddin Aly, informs us that he massacred in his camp

camp before Delhi, 100,000 Indian prisoners who had smiled when the army of their countrymen appeared in their sight. Several lofty towers were erected by him of human sculls; and, for these structures, Isfahan furnished 70,000, while Bagdat was condemned after a revolt to supply 90,000 heads*. In imitating such savage monsters of his nation, the celebrated Attila might justly assume the well-earned epithet of the Scourge of God, as a title of his royal dignity. Did not our own experience, and the present conduct of the Moguls, so strongly countenance these facts recorded in history, it would be almost impossible to yield our assent to their truth. Since the arrival of many Europeans now in India, actions equally barbarous have been committed under their eye, though the weakness of the present Mahomedan princes may have confined the extent of their cruelty to a narrower space. The fortune of war has placed several European and native detachments in the power of Hyder Ali and of Tippoo, and the treatment they in general received was equally inhuman, and perhaps as incredible as any of the above. In detailing facts that so deeply affect the character of a whole people, you have a right to the best authority. I shall gladly relieve myself from the responsibility, by giving you the very words of a respectable officer, who has been himself a witness to the sufferings he describes, and which he has had the misfortune to share.

THE

* Idem, in a note, p. 368.

" THE Chief, to whom Colonel Baillie held up the flag of truce, treated it at first with contempt, and at the same time endeavoured to cut off the Colonel. A few minutes after this, our men received orders to lay down their arms, with an intimation that quarter would be granted. This order was no sooner complied with, than the enemy rushed upon them in the most ferocious manner : seven eighths of the whole were put to the sword ; and but for the humane interposition of the French commanders, Lally and Pimoran, who implored and insisted with the conquerors to shew mercy, the gallant remains of our little army must have fallen a sacrifice to that savage thirst of blood with which the tyrant disgraced his victory.

Indira Gandhi National
Library

" WHILE the enemy's horse and elephants marched again and again in barbarian triumph over the field of battle, the wounded and bleeding English, who were not instantly trodden to death by the feet of these animals, lingered out a miserable existence, exposed in the day to the burning rays of the vertical sun, and in the night to the ravages of foxes, jackals, and tigers, allured to that horrid scene by the scent of human blood. Many officers, as well as privates, stripped of all that they had, after protracting hour after hour, and day after day, in pain, miserably perished : others rising, as it were from the dead, after an incredible loss of blood, which induced for a time the most perfect insensibility and stupefaction, found means to rejoin their friends

friends in chains, with whom they were destined for years to share the horrors of a jail, rendered still more dreadful by frequent apprehensions of that assassination, which they had the most undoubted proofs, had been practised on numbers of their fellow sufferers, dispersed in different places of confinement, throughout the dominions of a barbarous enemy.

" MANY of these unfortunate officers were, in fact, cut off by poison, after suffering every indignity which the most wanton cruelty can inflict. Under these hardships, several died, and were cast, not into a grave, but into a jungle, where the jackals devoured their emaciated carcases. Some were driven to madness, a few were compelled to embrace, at least outwardly, the Mahomedan religion, and were forced to submit to the disgraceful rite of initiation. This was in general the fate of the boys; who were intended to recruit and improve the army of the conqueror. Their lot was, perhaps, the most excruciating of all; since it was embittered, not merely by personal suffering, but by a feeling of degradation and self-reproach for their involuntary apostacy. As often as they were seen by their countrymen, from the jail, performing the exercise under the lash of their masters, and in Mahomedan dress, tears of shame, rather than from pain, were seen to drop from their eyes.

" THAT

"THAT this treatment was not more characteristic of the tyrant's cruelty, than that of his slaves, the prisoners witnessed many mortifying proofs. The men who carried the *doolies* of the sick, as well as some others of the lower castes of people in Hyder's dominions, frequently reviled them in terms too gross to be repeated. They told them that they should be forced to eat their own dung, and expressed their hope, "that when they arrived at the place of destination, Hyder would not fail to put them to death."

You will, from declamations you hear against European rapacity in the East, be led to attribute these severities to the antipathy, or revenge of the Mysorean king; but it does not appear, that in similar circumstances, he would have treated his countrymen, or even his own subjects with greater humanity. The emperors of Hindostan have always been in the habit of treating their enemy with cruelty; and the head of a fallen foe has ever been the most grateful present a dutiful subject could offer to his sovereign. Stratagems, treasons, and massacre, comprehend the whole scope and range of Indian politics; nor is the man who successfully practises them, regarded with so much abhorrence as admiration. When a despot dies, hereditary succession is not so invariably the rule of supplying the vacant throne, as the power or address of the competitors: and the elevation of a son to the Musnud is the signal of death to all his brothers. During the most flourishing

flourishing period of the Mogul Empire, the hypocritical Aurengzebe wrested the sceptre from his own father * ; and imprisoned him for life in his palace, by the instrumentality of his grandson. While the usurper committed this outrage against filial duty, he was religiously worshipping at the tomb of his grandfather Acber ; and, as the reward of his treason, he enjoyed the throne of Hindostan for near half a century, and transmitted his name as an example, not as a warning, to his posterity. The present emperor, after having his eyes put out by his rebellious subjects, suffered daily indignities worse than death to a mind of any sensibility.

THE present Nabob of Oude, after the elevation of his brother, had frequent attempts made against his life by poison ; which he endeavoured in vain to retaliate in the same manner ; nor have either of these intended assassins forfeited the esteem or allegiance of their subjects. It is firmly believed, that the short reign of Vizier Ali, which intervened between that of the brothers, was marked by two different attempts to murder the English officers, and the Governor-General. Colonel Dow, unable to deny this propensity to cruelty, or controvert such a train of facts, endeavours to palliate it by urging the necessity laid upon every individual of royal birth, who has no alternative between a throne or a grave ; but

* Shah Jehan ; vide Dow's Hist. Hindost.

but this very necessity originates in the cruel maxims of Mogul government; and the dreadful effect of cruelty, is by him inadvertently held up to palliate its guilt.



Indira Gandhi
National
Centre for the Arts

OF

OF SOME DETACHED CUSTOMS AMONG THE NATIVES.

.....

Mirzapour, Dec. 9, 1798.

AN European on first beholding the cottages of the Hindoos, is struck with the meanness of their appearance. The whole stock of furniture and clothing of a family, make a very humble store to supply the wants of six or eight persons : but these wants are in general proportioned to the means of supply, and in a year of ordinary plenty, a native of this country is not much more at a loss for the necessaries of life than an European. A family that has never drank any thing stronger than water, nor eat a more substantial meal than rice and vegetables, is placed as nearly as human beings can be beyond the reach of fortune.

AMIDST all their penury, therefore, the Hindoos apparently enjoy a larger share of domestic comfort than could be looked for in such circumstances.

The

The members of a family, like those of the state, pay implicit submission to the head of it; and look up to him with great respect. There are here few instances of undutifulness to parents; so far otherwise, a son will not sit down in the presence of his father, unless he receives his command so to do. The women are remarkable for gentleness and submission: their seclusion from society is, among the lower ranks, but partially inforced*, and where it is most rigidly adhered to, probably occasions little regret, as ideas of happiness are much influenced by habit; and a Hindoo female is equally surprised how enjoyment should be found in company, as an European lady can be at her bearing the horrors of confinement. Exposed to few of the asperities of life, and strangers to ambition, a native family enjoys not only tranquillity, but contentment and cheerfulness; and even under despotic government, is perhaps less frequently disturbed in its noiseless tenor of life, than one in the same sphere in Europe.

IN the private merrymakings of the Hindoos, great use is made of musical instruments, as well as vocal performances.

* From every enquiry I have made of the inhabitants in the interior parts of India, I find where there are few strangers they do not confine their women. The people are naturally shy, and from religious prejudices refrain from intercourse with strangers. Dr Robertson is probably well founded in his conjecture, that the degree of restraint in which the Hindoo women are kept, is borrowed from their Mahomedan conquerors.

performances. The airs are simple and not unpleasant. Fire works have been a principal amusement at public rejoicings from the earliest periods. Fire balls, or blue lights, employed in besieged places, to observe the motions and positions of the enemy during the night, are in use all over India, and in greater perfection than in Europe. In those parts that have never been visited by Europeans or Mahomedans, rockets are found, a weapon almost of universal use in Indian war. This instrument consists of a tube of iron about eight inches long, and an inch and a half in diameter, closed at one end. It is filled and fastened to a bamboo about the thickness of a walking cane, and about four feet long, which is pointed with iron. At the opposite end of the tube from this point, is the match : the man who uses it, points the end of the shaft which is shod with iron, to the object at which he aims ; and setting fire to the match, it flies off with great velocity. From the irregularity of its motion, the rocket is difficult to be avoided, and it sometimes acts with considerable effect, especially among cavalry.

THE late embassy to China, has established the great proficiency made by that people, in every species of fire-work, and particularly in their nocturnal illuminations ; yet it does not appear, that either they or the Hindoos were acquainted with the use of artillery before the Europeans. In the Gentoo laws, there is a prohibition of the use of fire arms, but the words so translated, may be equally truly rendered

arms of fire. Mention is made in Sanscrit of she-tagney, or the weapon that kills an hundred men at once, which has been translated cannon; but these expressions afford hardly any proof the Hindoos being possessed of such a discovery. Guns are now used over all Hindostan, and had they been equally common at the period when the country was first visited by Europeans, there can hardly be a doubt that they would have attracted their observation.

THE final solution of that question which has been considerably agitated of late, whether the eastern or European nations first understood the use of fire arms, will probably rest in favour of the latter; a substance possessing many of the properties of gun powder, was known in Asia long previous to its discovery in Europe, but it does not appear to have been applied much to the improvement of the art of war, and for the use of artillery, not at all.

SEVERAL changes in that art are however certainly introduced in Asia. The use of chariots is frequently mentioned in the Sanscrit writings, and from these it appears that the infantry were placed in the center, cavalry on each flank of the army, and beyond these chariots of war.

THE

* Vide the Heetopades, translated by Mr Wilkins. Quintus Curtius mentions the same fact, lib. 3. c. 14.

THE Hindoo code contains several regulations, which may be regarded as their law of nations, and which characterises them as a humane, and in some respects a civilized people. It prohibits not only the weapons termed fire-arms, but all poisoned instruments. It forbids also violence to all incapable of defence, or who solicit quarter. It forbids the slaughter of any one who has no means of escape; of a person who is sitting down; of him who is naked, or asleep; and in short of every person not actually engaged in hostilities.

THE institutions of the Hindoos, like those of every other nation in an imperfect state of improvement, retain, along with these humane provisions, an unseemly mixture of their pristine barbarism. Trial by ordeal, which was formerly so common among the half civilized nations of Europe, still keeps its place in the Hindostanee code: various species of this trial are there particularized, and the precise mode of conducting them defined. Fire or water is most usually employed, but other methods are sometimes adopted by choice of the parties *. A person of rank being accused of corresponding with the enemy in time of war, thus writes; "Let my accuser be produced; let me see him face to face; let the most venomous snakes be put into a pot; let us put

our

* Vide Asiatic Researches, where this mode of trial is described at large.

our hands into it together ; let it be covered for a certain time ; and he who remains unhurt shall be innocent."

A mode of trial which leaves the decision of a cause to chance, or the immediate interposition of a miraculous power, certainly indicates a state of society not far advanced in the science of jurisprudence. Yet when the cause is perplexed, such an appeal seems natural enough to a simple people. It was adopted by the Jews in an early period : and among them it was accompanied, as it is here, with all the solemnity of a religious ceremony, to render it more awful and impressive upon the minds of the parties.

Indira Gandhi National
Library & Archives

THERE seems to be a considerable similiarity between some of the rites and religious observances of the Jews and the eastern nations. The Sanniaffes or Faqueers, who separate themselves from the rest of mankind, in consequence of a vow, resemble the Nazarites among the Jews, whose conduct was regulated by certain legal injunctions. Vide Numb. ch. ii. v. 2. " Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord, &c." —v. 5. " All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head ; until the days be fulfilled, in which he separateth to the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head

head grow."—v. 6. "All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body." This particular relating to approaching a dead body, is strictly a part of Hindoo manners at present. A party coming from the Ganges with water, if met by a dead person carried thither, pour out the water as impure, and bring another load.

THE law of retaliation was observed among both nations: both were disposed to substitute certain rites, instead of religious duty: circumcision is the initiatory ceremony to the religion of both; and a Jew, as well as a Mussulman, rested his hope of salvation upon that, and other observances equally frivolous. It required strong efforts on the part of the first teachers of Christianity, to convince the former that rectitude of conduct was of more importance than outward show; and that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature." We find that they, as well as other uninformed nations, paid a superstitious regard to certain days, and entertained an aversion to certain species of food; though in this they were not encouraged, but disavowed by their best teachers who declared "their fasts, their new moons*, and their sabbaths to be an abomination." The simple doctrine which teaches to "cease to do evil, and learn

* The Mussulmans, as well as the Jews, pay a kind of worship to the new moon.

learn to do well," has been unpopular with the multitude in all countries. To them the belief of mystery, and the practice of superstition is easy; but the reformation of life, is like the ascent from hell,
Hic labor, hoc opus.



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts



OF THE STATE OF LITERATURE AMONG THE NATIVES
OF INDIA.

.....

Allahabad, July 1797.

ot

THE learning of the Hindoos and Mussulmans, as to the quantum of it, has of late been the subject of much discussion. Parties have been formed, each with a system to defend; one carrying their pretensions to knowledge above all reasonable bounds; and the other attempting to depreciate their attainments in science to a standard, perhaps, lower than the truth.

FEW of their books have yet been translated into the European languages, or made the objects of impartial criticism. All their stock of knowledge, whether great or small, is confined to the various manuscripts, either preserved in the public libraries, or in the cabinet of the learned.

THE

THE art of printing being unknown, or at least never practised, literature in India has always necessarily been confined to a very narrow circle: the author of Seir Mutakhareen, giving an account of the learned men who flourished in the time of Ali Verdi Khan, furnishes a few hints that will serve as a basis for forming an impartial estimate of the state of Mahomedan literature. Whether his prejudices led him to overlook the Hindoo sages of that period, or whether their want of merit rendered them unworthy of his notice, is a point which we do not venture to decide: the fact is certain that he particularizes none of the unbelievers.

THE first of this illustrious body who decorated the reign of Ali Verdi, was Moluvy * Naffyr, born in the province of Behar. This man, we are told, was "a scholar of so great credit, that he followed his master into Persia; and though his poverty obliged him to walk all the way on foot, he did not omit a lesson any one day." His attainments are said to have corresponded with this ardour of pursuit: for he is represented as profoundly versed in astronomy, mathematics, and algebra. He attained to the rank of second messenger from the Persian Court, to carry its dispatches to the governors on the frontier provinces towards India. He returned at last to India, where he obtained a jaghir in his native

* Moluvy is the title corresponding to Doctor.

tive province, near Patna, where his posterity now live."

SUCH is the account given of this great man, by Golam Houssein Khan. With regard to his astronomy and algebra, it is to be observed, that these sciences were chiefly employed in calculating nativities, and predicting future events, from the position of the heavenly bodies. According to this author's own testimony, every prince or governor of a province kept in his retinue a number of astrologers, whom he consulted on every enterprize, nor would they move from their station on the most urgent business till a favourable hour had been decided upon by these sages. Even at present, after two hundred years intercourse with the English, their appetite for divination and prophecy has not much abated. The Nabob of Oude consults his astrologers what dress it will be most lucky to appear in each day; at what door he is to go out, and by which to enter his palace after an excursion. The poorest of the people will strip off their rags to engage a fortune-teller to declare their future destiny; and for this they will part with a dinner, though they may not have a meal besides. Probably the greatest merit of the celebrated Moluvy Naffyr consisted in his knowing the language of the north of India, and interpreting to men in office from the Persian Court.

THIS panegyrist declares that he became "a proficient in the whole circle of the sciences," specifying the

the mathematics as one source of his renown; however you will recollect, that as there were at this period no fort regularly constructed in India, nor any tolerable train of artillery, the Rev. Moluvy's mathematics must have been chiefly speculative.

THE next in rank among the Mahomedan scholars, is the son of Naffyr, Daood Aaly Khan. It is said of him, "that having obtained the whole paternal estate, by the partiality of his father, he portioned it out among the different members of the family, in the manner regulated by the laws of God*."

AFTER having in this manner arranged his affairs, we are informed, "that he felt himself fired with a desire of visiting the gate of the pontif of this world†; of beholding the completion of mussulmanism ‡; and of kissing the threshold of that door which is watched by hosts of angels §.

"AFTER having enjoyed to his contentment the measure of happiness after which his heart panted, he returned to the place of his nativity, and passed away his time in assisting the Seyds and necessitous ||. In
the

* That is of the Coran.

† Nedjef.

‡ Mecca.

§ Medina, where is the tomb of Mahomet.

|| Seyds are the descendants of Ali.

the number of causes daily brought before him for his decision, for he was both a casuist and a magistrate, his sole view was to cut short differences to the satisfaction of both parties. He also contented himself with his legal fees; and this pittance, joined to his portion of the paternal estate, he managed with so much economy, as to enable him to relieve the needy, and to administer comfort to widows and orphans whom he admitted to his table; without attempting to live on better fare in private by himself".

THIS alludes to the Indian method of giving entertainments: which if judged by our notions, is strongly marked with indelicacy. The guests all sit upon a square carpet; the master of the feast being placed at the north side. A number of separate dishes are placed before him; and a different assortment less delicate along the two sides, according to the rank of the guests. Towards the farther end of the carpetting, the guests of inferior note are seated, and the dishes are, before them, greatly inferior both in number and quality. This management so indecent, according to our ideas, was conspicuous even at the tables of the most illustrious Romans. A different species of bread, and an inferior wine, were served to the guests, from that used by the giver of the entertainment. Vide Juvenal. Sat.

"It would be difficult" says the biographer on this subject, "to give him all the praise he deserves, nor does the historian find any hesitation in acknowledging

ledging the impotence of his pen upon that extensive subject. "It, however, ought not to be omitted, that after his return, and after having kissed the sacred and sublime threshold, he altered his name from Daoood Aali Khan, to that of Zair Hoffein Khan, which he then assumed, and ever after gloried in the alteration."

IT is common after a pilgrimage to assume a new name, with the title of saint; these names are still more fantastical than those appellations of our saints in the days of Oliver Cromwell. One person at Alahabad assumed the name of Shahcotta, or saint dog, the female of which cottee, has sometimes been the title of religious women. Fame, however much it may be concealed from the religious devotees themselves, seems to be the great end of their peregrinations, and vanity the motive for undertaking them.

THIS account which is written with some eloquence and much simplicity, I have considerably abridged; whatever impression it makes with regard to the learning of the venerable person mentioned, it offers a very favourable idea of his moral character, and therefore the Molovy will command esteem from those who may think differently from the noble author on the subject of his learning.

THE third ornament of this period, according to our author, "was Meer Mahmud Alim, one of the most virtuous and most venerable persons of Azimabad

bad (Patna). His knowledge was in much repute, and his compositions in much esteem and celebrity ; but I cannot speak properly of them, having no personal knowledge of either."

THIS sketch is truly characteristic of the learned in a country where the art of printing is unknown. An author of first celebrity has never been read by a learned nobleman, who was almost his contemporary. The Persian news paper, (Acber) is still in manuscript, after an intercourse with Europe of two hundred years.

" MÓLUVY Mahmed Aaref is the fourth of the literary characters of the age; he was eminent for knowledge, and one of those men fond of corners and retirement. He died early in the reign of Aliverdi Khan, and was entombed in the castle of Azimabad*, where he always resided. One of his disciples Shah Gurg †, was a pious man whom I have often seen. He lived at a distance from the world in solitude and celibacy, and spent his time in prayer.

" THE fifth was Meer Rustem-aaly, a man satisfied with his corner ‡, but not destitute of science and erudition : this at least is the character given of him,
by

* The tombs of religious mussulmans are visited by pilgrims ; and are illuminated by perpetual lamps, placed in a niche at the end.

† Saint Wolf.

‡ Literally translated.

by those persons, that much frequent religious men*. I know him but little : he passed for a man versed in the Coran, and capable of all the subtleties of explanation.

" THE sixth learned person was Shah Mahmed-a-men, who lived in celibacy ; a man much versed in the Coran, and so very intelligent, as to be inferior only to an angel. Intent both interiorly and exteriorly on the service of God, he seemed *brim-full of the rays of his maker's love*†. His words and actions made so much impression on my mind, that when I went on the fame of his character to pay him a visit, I felt within myself on entering his dwelling, such a disgust at the avocations of this world, and so strong an inclination to abandon this borrowed habitation, and to addict myself wholly to the love of God, that I had nearly taken a final resolution on that subject. He passed the night in adoration and mortification, always awake, and sleeping by day hardly a single hour. His dwelling was constantly thronged by visitors ; while he was so intent upon the object of his love, and pronounced the ejaculation, *O my beloved!* with such emphasis, and drew from his breast such deep sobs, that the hearts of his visitors were set on fire. Shah-Mahmed his master was celebrated at Azi-

K k

mabad

* Sovereign princes paid visits to learned men; and prostrated themselves before them ; and when visited by them, they went to meet them, and placed them on the same musnud.

† Persian idiom, preserved in this phrase.

mabad for miracles and prodigies; and he for reading lectures publicly, when his temper softened, for he was somewhat rough and passionate."

THERE are a few other sages celebrated by this historian, but it is probable that you have by this time formed a tolerably accurate notion of the state of science among the conquerors of India: their celebrity is acquired and upheld by means exactly similar to those practised by our saints in the darkest ages of papal ignorance. The same merit is attached to their celibacy, their retirement from the world, their miracles and their devotion: and a similar reverence, or rather worship is paid to their ashes, as our learned and pious ancestors paid to those of St Dunstan, or Thomas à Becket.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE fame of saintship and profound learning, is perhaps more easily acquired among the highest classes in Asia, than it ever was in Europe among the vulgar: for it is to be remembered, that the worthies here celebrated all lived in the present age, were of the highest rank, and enjoyed the admiration of princes.

No notice is taken of any Hindoos of literature by this author: nor is this probably owing to his bigoted attachment to Mahomedanism; it does not appear that there are any at present of sufficient merit to entitle them to a place in his list, such as it is.

WHEN such are the acquisitions of men of the highest rank and learning, you may conjecture the deplorable state of ignorance in which the great body of the people are involved. They are deluded and plundered by every rude pretender to sanctity: their religion consists wholly of rites, and their science of charms. To gain their admiration, it is sufficient to assume a phantaſtic dress, and to utter sobs and ejaculations.

ABUL Fazel, the minister of Acber, submitted to the tuition of learned pundits, for many years, and has written an abstract of Hindoo science at once insipid, subtle, and unintelligible *. The same thing happened to Dara Sheko, the elder brother of Au-
rengzebe, who, after many years profound research, has left a sketch of his attainments, that demonstrates nothing so much as the futility of his pursuit.

SIR William Jones himself, who carried on the study of Sanscrit literature with greater success than any other man, seems often bewildered, and becomes unintelligible to himself in pursuing these subtleties and conceits, which have been dignified with the name of science: and it may safely be affirmed that on no subject did he ever bestow so much labour, and derive so little useful knowledge. In a paper upon this subject, communicated to the Society in

Calcutta,

* It is contained in the 3d vol. of Ayeen Acbery.

Calcutta, he thus concludes : " It results from this analysis, (of Hindoo literature,) that the Veda, Upaveda, Vedanga, Purana, Derma, and Dersana, are the six great sastras, in which all knowledge, divine and human is supposed to be comprehended. Whenever we direct our attention to Hindoo literature, the notion of infinity presents itself ; and the longest life would not be sufficient for the perusal of near 500,000 stanzas in the puianos, with a million more, perhaps, in the other works before mentioned."



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

OF

OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF JUSTICE.

.....

THE police of India, as conducted by the later emperors of Hindostan, forms an important subject of enquiry. The principles of it were meant to be adhered to by the Europeans who succeeded to their power, while its abuses, which had crept in during the decline of the empire, were to be corrected.

UNFORTUNATELY the whole knowledge obtained in these branches of administration, by Europeans, was at first gained from their deputies, clerks, and other servants ; who, though well acquainted with all the arts of peculation, and the perquisites to be gained in each department, could give no proper account of the duties each officer was bound to discharge.

THE

THE Nizam was the principal officer in each province, or viceroyalty : if several of these were united under the government of one person, he was then denominated a Subadar, and enjoyed the highest rank among the Imperial Officers, next to the Vizier. He had the supreme direction of all the officers of his province : his trust was almost unlimited, and his power so great, that during many of the latter reigns, the viceroys scarcely acknowledged, or seldom felt their dependence ; and at last their subjection to the Imperial Court was merely nominal.

NEXT to the Nizam, the Foujdars were the highest military officers : they were allotted to each Subadary, or vice-royalty, in number proportioned to its extent, and to that of the refractory zemindars which it contained. The Foujdar had under his command from one to two thousand horse, and his military rank was in general greater than his actual command. Military rank is estimated by the number of horse, and is often nominal ; the rank of a thousand being given without any actual command. Their quarters were in some town or fort, in the district ; and they marched with a kettle drum, and standards displayed, the insignia of their office and rank, which was considered as noble. Bengal, exclusive of Dacca, contained ten Foujdaries ; and Behar was divided into eight.

THE duty of this officer was to reduce to subjection all refractory landholders ; to suppress all riots

riots and insurrections ; to disperse and apprehend troops of banditti and thieves, with which the country has at all times been infested. They were also to afford protection to the Altinghas, or charity lands bestowed on the necessitous. They and their deputies were to aid and assist the Nizam on any emergency, which might require the combined military force of the province *.

THE Darago of the Adawlet, that is, president of the civil court, was the supreme civil magistrate of the province. The Emperors retained in their own hands the decision of all causes of importance in the last resort ; and for this purpose they set apart two days of every week. The ordinary distribution of justice was left to the Adawlet, over which the Daroga presided, with a salary annexed to his office, and a jaghir, to remove, by the possession of independence, every temptation to corruption.

FROM day break, till three in the afternoon, this judge continued upon his tribunal, where he received the complaints of all ranks ; and gave a speedy decision on every subject in litigation. In matters of smaller moment, his decision was final ; in cases of difficulty, a reference was made to the Emperor and his council.

THIS

* Golam Houssein Khan. Seir Mutakhareen, vol. 3. p. 170.

THIS office, like every other, on the decline of the empire, became venal; and instead of being often refused as a situation of great responsibility, it was undertaken by whoever could purchase it; and was converted into an instrument of oppression, and the means of securing a fortune to the judge and his deputies. Under the English, the practice of the judges was still more flagitious than ever; from their ignorance of the customs of the country, and their inability to detect the malversation of those who acted under them. In 1782, it was vested in the English gentlemen themselves, which proved a great relief; in as far, however, as the minute details are executed by the natives, so far probably does their avarice taint the fountain of justice. This is boldly asserted by the Golam Hossein Khan, a nobleman of great worth and respectability, who has, like another Clarendon, written a history of his own times with as much truth and impartiality as possibly could be expected from a person in such circumstances. The Mahomedan noblemen were the great agents of the Imperial government; they filled every office of honour or emolument: these being now executed by the English personally, the ancient families of distinction have suffered by our conquest almost a total overthrow of rank and consequence, as well as wealth.

THE exaggerated lamentations of this author, and his impressive description of the grievous state of oppression, which the natives suffer under our government,

ment, and the partial panegyric bestowed on the Mahomedan system of government, is no more than what was to be expected from his feelings and his prejudices. Where these do not interfere, he gives a decided approbation to the justice and liberality displayed by our countrymen upon every occasion.

THE Cazi was the next judge in the Mahomedan administration ; he declared the laws in such criminal and civil cases as were connected with religion, and may be regarded as the supreme ecclesiastical judge. He had an ample pension and jaghir ; as any corruption in his function would have been deemed peculiarly disgraceful to law and religion.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

SOME crimes, such as fornication and prostitution, came particularly under the cognizance of the Cazi ; he inflicted severe punishment upon such as kept slave girls in their houses, or prostitutes, or even concubines, except consecrated by the prescribed forms of law. The musicians were under his immediate inspection, all differences among them were decided by him ; and to prevent extravagance at feasts, no man was allowed to hire a greater number of them than was suitable to his rank.

“ THIS institution, says Golam Hoffein, has long been perverted into an instrument of taxation ; the office has been regarded as a patent entitling to cer-

tain fees, and has been leased, and underleased to any sordid person that would become a purchaser, whether he were acquainted with mufslimanism or not. Fees have been invented by the low substitutes of this office, at burials, at circumcision, and at marriage. The poor have been deluded into a belief, that till the Cazi's depute has received his fee, the spirit of the deceased does not quit the house ; till it is produced, the poor relations are deemed impure, and are shunned by all their acquaintances. To discharge this debt, the person will sell his land, his effects, or even rob upon the high-way. The same pernicious consequence followed their incapacity to discharge the fees for marriage and circumcision *.

Indira Gandhi National
Library & Archives

THE Suder ul Sooder, or Great Almoner, was an officer of very high authority, whose business was to guard the distribution of the charity lands : to prevent their resumption, or their alienation into other hands than those of the poor : he was also intrusted with the superintendence of the Cazi's office ; to prevent such as were ignorant of Mahomedanism from entering into that sacred function. His business was also to prevent encroachments upon the lands belonging to the Exchequer. This office, from the great discretionary power annexed to it, proved, in the hands of an unprincipled man, the source of a thousand

* Vide Seir Mutakhareen.

thousand peculations : instead of protecting the poor, it became the gulph which swallowed up the subsistence of the needy ; and under the pretence of almoner's fees, entailed a load of misery upon the unhappy poor. The abuse of this, and the preceding office, had become so enormous as to attract the notice of Mr Hastings, who had the merit of abolishing fees within the English territories, or at least confining them to the moderate rates customary in the most virtuous reigns.

THE clerk of the market, (Mhutasib,) was an officer of great importance, whose duties are now abandoned, and a person appointed to fill it, who uplifts the customary fees as a kind of perquisite. The Mhutasib India Gandhi National inspected the weights and measures ; fixed the price of commodities, and settled disputes : he preserved the peace of the markets by punishing riots and drunkards.

THE author of Seir Mutakhareen complains, that although double the fees and perquisites are now uplifted by the mhutasib, than were formerly, yet the streets and lanes are crowded with disorderly people; every corner is infested with drinking shops and tippling houses, while the rogueries committed by false scales exceed all estimation. A great variety of inferior officers, in the Nizam's and Foujdar's department, are in the appointment of the Emperor, and of consequence independent of these ministers. The most remarkable of these were the Vaaca Navise,

or

or gazetteer ; the Sevanah Navise, or historiographer, and the Harcarah, a head spy. It was their duty to commit to writing the principal events and occurrences of each day, and to dispatch them on the subsequent morning to the Emperor ; who, by this singular institution, was acquainted with every thing of note that happened in any part of the empire. These dispatches, which were carried to Court by regular posts, were presented by a Daroga to the Prince each day.

By these provincial intelligences, which often descended to very minute particulars, the Emperor had it in his power to redress grievances before the party had time to state them. Some imperial manuscripts of Aurengzebe are still preserved of his own dictio
Gandhi National Library, Ahmedabad
and hand-writing. Though these officers, from the nature of their duty, were made independent of the grandees who ruled in each province, even a suspicion of their intimacy was sufficient to dismiss them ; being deemed incompatible with the integrity of their intelligence.

MANNERS OF THE MUSSULMANS.

Lucknow, 1798.

THE manners of Mussulmans, from their numbers, and from their influence on society, since the conquest, form an important part of the history of Hindostan. By them almost every department of government has been conducted; the partiality of the conquerors for their countrymen, having committed to their management almost every branch of the administration. Their taste for show and splendour, as magistrates and governors of provinces, contributed indirectly to the prosperity of the vanquished, and in some measure alleviated the sufferings of a dependent and oppressed people.

IN the provinces of Bengal, and Behar, the immense establishment of 150,000 or 170,000 cavalry, offered employment to many of the poorer classes, who

who subsisted by furnishing them with food, clothing, and furniture; while the civil establishment annexed to judges, collectors of revenue and other officers, provided for perhaps an equal number of people, and distributed among them with rapidity the far greater part of the contributions levied in each province.

THE nephews of Aliverdi Khan, though only the deputies of a viceroy, and appointed at a period when the country was harrassed by a foreign enemy, lived with a splendour more resembling sovereign princes, than persons invested with temporary and delegated power. Seyd Mahmed, the youngest and least aspiring, had, in the district of Purneah, an establishment of 15,000 cavalry and infantry, besides a vast number of elephants, camels, horses and carriages, with a large park of artillery. His court, receiving salaries, was numerous and splendid, without reckoning a train of dependents who received monthly pensions, from one to five thousand rupees. The seraglio consisted of five hundred women, besides eunuchs and other servants. The jewels, table, and equipage, were all in a style of magnificence that seems to vie with the splendour of the Jewish kings, in the prosperous reigns of David and Solomon, those illustrious Sovereigns of a great and independent nation: yet this Seyd Mahmed was only the deputy of a Soubadar over one district, who himself was a servant, paying tribute, and acknowledging subjection to the Imperial Court. His establishment

is particularised, not on account of its superior expence or magnificence, but because it has been faithfully described by a historian of rank and integrity, who enjoyed a considerable office under his administration *.

THE two other nephews of Aliverdi had much more considerable appointments than the Governor of Purneah; they lived in still greater splendour, and yet their courts were only images of the grandeur and wealth displayed at that of Moorshed abad. This provincial capital contained, within the memory of persons still living, some of the richest subjects in the world. During the Mahratta incursions, the house of Jugget Seet was plundered of two millions and a half sterlings, in silver; an accident which so little affected his credit, that he continued to grant bills of exchange at sight, and to a large amount, to government. When the enormities of Surajah ul Dowlah had rendered his government odious, Meer Jaffier, aided by this banker's wealth, which secured him the patronage of the Europeans, ascended the throne. The domestics of this Jagget Seet, we are told, amounted to two thousand persons.

DURING

* Golam Hossein Khan, vol. 1st. p. 666. This prince, says he, governed Purneah with so much equity and attention to the subjects, that the nobles and peasants spoke of his administration with great applause:

DURING their religious festivals, the Mussulmans display their love of show in a remarkable manner : the whole river, upon certain occasions, for several miles, displays one blaze of light ; their mosques are also illuminated, and their processions dazzle the eye with a profusion of gilt and silvered work, and ornaments of artificial flowers. The most pompous ceremonies in Europe make a very feeble impression upon those who have been spectators of Mahommedan solemnities.

IN the court of Aliverdi, this passion for magnificence was tempered by a religious gravity, and austerity of manners, by which that prince was distinguished. A bigot to Shyism, and soured by the narrow principles of that sect, he shewed a marked aversion to wine, and illegitimate connections with the sex. He used to awake two hours before day-break, says his historian, and having performed the usual ablutions, and prayers of divine precept, he repeated other devotions by way of supererogation. “ His breakfast, which consisted of coffee, was finished before seven, when he gave audience in a public hall, and heard petitions, for two hours.” He afterwards, with the great officers, or with his relations, conversed in a private apartment, sometimes upon business, but oftener upon cookery, generally “ ordering some new dish, or giving some particular directions for dressing such as were common.”

By noon dinner was over, and he retired to sleep, “when the story tellers and bed watchmen attended and did their office *.” In Asia, where not one in a thousand can read, and still fewer have an inclination, a story teller becomes a very useful profession in the retinue of a great man: but with ignorance there is generally a great want of curiosity, and these story tellers are employed not for instruction, but to lull their masters asleep. The bed-watchmen are employed in chaffing or rubbing the limbs, which, in a hot country, is found very refreshing: both these offices are sometimes performed by women.

A short repose during the hottest part of the day, is perhaps necessary in this climate; the greater part of the Europeans, and all the natives, indulge themselves in a habit so grateful to a relaxed frame. The pious Aliverdi never exceeded one hour in this gratification, after which he performed his customary noon prayers, and read a chapter of the Coran; having refreshed himself with a cooling draught of ice water †.

ABOUT one or two in the afternoon, audience was given to those learned and pious sages, of whom a

M m

few

* Vide Seir Mutakhareen, vol. 3. p. 680.

† Ice is preserved for creams, and for cooling water in this country, by a process now almost universally known in Europe. During the rains, saltpetre supplies the place of ice.

few have been introduced to your notice on a former occasion. By some of them the Coran was read and explained for two hours, when the holy men retired, after observing the same routine of respectful formalities by which they were introduced: by this you are not to understand, that, like servile courtiers, they paid their obeisance; they were met at the entrance with profound respect by the viceroy, and one of them placed on a musnud directly opposite to his own.

So incredible is the power of custom, that even the decorous habits of Aliverdi Khan, could not conquer a practice of introducing at court a set of buffoons and jesters, common in India *. After a short conversation on the news of the day, which was supported by the opulent merchants and others, these men were introduced, who bandied about amongst each other the coarsest ribbaldry, and most indelicate sarcasms, to the great entertainment of the dignified persons who were their hearers. These jesters were called (Hedjra) hermaphrodites, and had merited the appellation by means the most unnatural, and for purposes not to be described.

THE

* These are ordered to be kept by the magistrate, in the sacred volumes: "He shall retain in his service a great number of buffoons, or parasites, jesters and dancers, and athletics; and he shall render all his servants contented and grateful."—Vide Gentoo Laws, p. 118.

THE hour of supper was about twilight, a slight repast, which this prince partook with the princesses, his relations, his daughters, and grand-daughters. Those dancing women, who constituted the greatest part of their entertainment, and in whose company all his contemporaries spent a large portion of their time, were admitted at none of the avocations of Aliverdi Khan *:

YOU must not, however, conclude, that the correct and austere manners of the viceroy guided the conduct of his dissolute courtiers; or that strict virtue was maintained by those dignified ladies who made a part of his society. This whole family were, on the contrary, the foremost in every scene of dissipation. All his three daughters were notorious for their intrigues and gallantry in a part of the world where women of rank live in the greatest privacy, or are secluded from all mixed company. If they travel, it is in a covered carriage, lest they should be prophaned by the eyes of a stranger. Such carriages are deemed sacred in every part of India, nor are they interrupted by an enemy even in time of war.

THIS custom, established by the law of nations, for the protection of the sex, the profligate daughters of

* Some part of the Seraglio, and even companies of dancing women, generally accompanied the Mahomedan princes when travelling, and frequently attended them in a campaign.

of Aliverdi availed themselves of, to carry on their intrigues. In these vehicles, secure from interruption, they were conveyed to the houses of their gallants, or had them conveyed, in the guise of women, into the Haram.

SURAJA Dowlah, the successor and grandson of Aliverdi, practised at the earliest age, and often in the public view, all those debaucheries which are known in Asia. By such conduct, joined to an insolent behaviour to his officers, he effectually alienated them from his service; and when his imprudence plunged him into a war with the English, a numerous party of them sought an opportunity of betraying him. This they found at the memorable battle of Plassey, where the young viceroy's power received a shock, from which it never recovered.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORIAN GHOLAM HOSSEIN
KHAN.

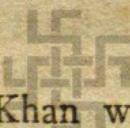
.....

Calcutta, Jan. 1798.

IN giving an idea of the literature of India, I cannot omit mentioning Golam Hossein Khan, the late author of a work, entitled *Seir Mutakhareen*, or *View of Modern Times*. This work is regarded as classical Persian, in point of style; and contains a civil history of Hindostan, from the death of Aurengzebe to the year 1781. The biographical anecdotes found in this work, concerning many of our countrymen, who are still living, renders it peculiarly interesting: the details of the English conquests in India, and his strictures upon the British government in that country, convey the ideas of a native, of high character, upon subjects of the first importance. This work, though translated into something like English, by a renegado Frenchman, is but little known even to Orientalists, except by name.

THIS

THIS Mogul nobleman was a partisan of the present Emperor during his fallen fortunes ; but like the great Clarendon, he delivers his sentiments with spirit and impartiality ; and with a force, clearness, and simplicity of stile rarely to be found in Asiatic authors, and which justly entitle him to preheminence among the historians of his country. The history of his life, given by himself, is prefixed to his volumes ; some particulars of it I shall insert, for it must be interesting to know the history of an independent native, who has displayed so much penetration, sagacity, and knowledge, respecting the conduct of the English in the government of his country.



GOLAM Hossein Khan was born in Shah-Jehanabad in 1140 of the Hegira ; and being related by his mother to Aliverdi Khan, the future Nabob of Bengal, he repaired to that province with all his connections. " Soon after our arrival in Moorshedabad, says he, fortune began to favour our family. Aliverdi Khan was appointed governor of Patna, where my father accompanied him, and where our family have lived to this day in affluence, dignity, and splendour : for the houses we bought, and the lands we acquired by purchase, gift, or otherwise, during the administration of Aliverdi, are to this day in our possession. In the year 1188, I was induced, unfortunately, to become security, to a considerable amount, for a zemindar, who already owed me the highest obligations, and from whom I little expected such

such a return, and so much perfidy as I met with. In consequence of his misconduct, I was called upon by the English government to pay 60,000 rupees on his account, which was the sum for which I had become bound. This demand coming on me unexpectedly, I was obliged to sell my jewels and plate, to the amount of 31,000 rupees, and to make up the balance by borrowing it from the banker. In this way I saved myself from the severity with which I would have been treated by the government to whom the money was due, and from the still more unfeeling rigor of the aumils, muttsudies, and other revenue officers, who seemed to wait with a malicious eye for the signal from government, to seize my whole property. I was obliged to put into the banker's hands, as a security for the money I had borrowed, the portion of land I possessed, and to endeavour to procure subsistence by some other means. But I was unable to get any employment, notwithstanding all the interest, and all the enquiries which my friends made in my behalf. At last it pleased fortune to give me a friend in General Goddard, a man of merit so conspicuous as to need no praise, and whose kindness and generosity to me, as well as to many of my countrymen, entitle him to my lasting gratitude. Such a character is not often met with among the English in Hindostan.

" HE was about this time appointed resident at Chumarghur; soon after which he came to Azimabad, (Patna,) where he made some stay. Being an

an old acquaintance, I went to see him. He had the kindness to enquire about my affairs, and he heard, with cordial concern, the calamity which had befallen them. "I am truly sorry, said he, to hear what has happened; but as I see no likelihood of your getting employment here, you had better come along with me, and we shall live upon what we can get." I cheerfully accepted of the proposal, looking upon it as one of the secret resources which Providence had kept in store for me. I accordingly got myself ready, and accompanied him to Chunar. But on General Goddart's arrival there, he found that the situation to which he was appointed, was, in point of emolument, much below what he had reason to expect, and indeed scarcely sufficient to defray his necessary expences. This circumstance disabled him from assisting me as he wished; but he committed to my care whatever concerned the revenue matters of that town. He allotted also for my accommodation an excellent house, which had been fitted up for himself; and sent his own boats to bring my wife and family. When they arrived, he gave them a pension of 300 rupees a month. After behaving to me in this very handsome manner, it was natural in him to receive my visits with that particular distinction which he shewed me.

"I have already observed, that General Goddart's income at Chunar, was much below his expenditure: in consequence of this, he now determined to relinquish his situation, and get permission to enter into

into the service of Azof ud Dowlah, having heard that that prince, dissatisfied with his old troops, had dismissed them, and intended to raise a new army, the discipline of which he wished to commit to the charge of an English officer of rank. My friend conceived that such an employment would be more suitable to his turn of mind, than the station he held at Chunar; and that it would likewise prove more profitable both to himself and me. But as he had no acquaintance with Mr Bristow, who was then minister at Lucknow, he did not think it proper to make any personal application to him on the subject. On his asking my opinion of the matter, I proposed that he should give me a letter to another Englishman, a friend of Mr Bristow's, to whom, by that means, I should find a ready introduction; and thereby be able to sound him in regard to the object in view, without mentioning his name. Of this he approved; and giving to me the letter to the gentleman at Lucknow, he wished me a successful journey."

AFTER, however, obtaining the consent of Mr Bristow to this measure, all the views of the General and Golam were defeated, by the appointment of Mr Middleton as resident in the room of Mr Bristow. Though this was an intimate acquaintance of the General, from whose friendship he expected much, he totally disapproved of the measure. On the failure of this scheme, and the appointment of General Goddard to join the army in the Deccan, all connection between him and our author was broken off.

At a more early period of his life, he had been employed in the courts of Aliverdi Khan, and that of his nephews, in consequential situations; and after having received various disappointments and reverses of fortune, he settled at last at Patna, where, on a sum of money left by his friends, he was enabled to support his family comfortably. It was there also, that during a period of quiet and retirement, he tells us he composed the Seir Mutakhareen. In the same city, in the earlier part of his life, he witnessed the massacre of the English, a cruelty which he reprobated, but which he could not prevent. He conferred, however, some obligations on Mr Fullarton, the only person who escaped from that bloody catastrophe.

Indira Gandhi National
Library & Archives

THE military and civil transactions of his time, which occupy the most considerable part of these volumes, have not precluded the author inserting large biographical anecdotes, which impart greater variety and interest to his work. He has spoken frequently of the character of authors, and discussed the merits of their writings; in this, however, his candour and benevolence of mind, appear to far greater advantage than his literary attainments. From the praises which he bestows on the contemptible reveries of fanatics, we can draw no favourable opinion of Mogul literature at this period; nor does it appear, that in any æra of the Empire, they ever rose above the humblest mediocrity.

WHEN

WHEN travelling in pursuit of business, he frequently stepped aside to visit what he terms the abodes of learned men ; and as often as he speaks of character, it is generally from personal observation and acquaintance. In his journey from Chunar to Lucknow, mentioned above, he went by way of Juanpore, and stopped there for some days; because, to use his own words, “ he understood it was become the residence of the illustrious and venerable Seid Mahmed Aſkheſſy,” of whom he had heard so much. “ I ſent to desire leave to pay him a respectful visit. Being admitted to his presence, I ſpent two hours with him. His conversation delighted me, even beyond what I expected : it was replete with the many excellencies for which he was celebrated ; and I took my leave of him fully ſatisfied, that fame in her encomiums had fallen short of what I had ſeen and heard. To this day I remember his venerable aspect, and enchanting conversation ; and they have made ſuch an impression on my mind, that I muſt ſuspend the narrative of my own actions, to give the reader a glimpse of the talents and virtues which adorned that diſtinguished man.

“ HE was of a family of Seids, that ranked for many ages amongst the moſt respectable of that ſect, in the city of Juanpore.”

THIS Seid of virtuous diſposition, and fine genius, wrote a book of practical morality, all the rules of which he extracted from his own practice ; ſo that this

this book was a commentary on his life. Very different this from the generality of moralists, whose principles and practice are completely at variance ; who preach up the utility of moral conduct, yet lead a life of sin.

“ His speech was such, that it seemed to flow from the fountain of wisdom ; and his advices and counsels were so many remedies against sickness and sorrow of heart.

“ HE possessed a very extensive knowledge, graced with so much modesty, that he instructed all who conversed with him, without making them feel their own inferiority. He lived upon a small income, without a wish to increase it.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

“ IT is true, he was not regularly initiated in the sciences ; but the richness of his mind, and the strength of his judgement, amply supplied that want. By the force of his own genius, he had become a repository of all the arts and sciences, practical as well as abstract. No wonder then, that his house was resorted to by all the learned persons of that city and neighbourhood, and by numbers who travelled thither from distant countries, being learned themselves, or possessing a love of knowledge.

“ THE natural turn of his mind was to candour and modesty ; so that he was as forward to acknowledge the merit of others, as he was studious to conceal

ceal his own. He gave his time to reading lectures, which is the noblest of all occupations; the noblest and most pleasing thing of all being to bring to light the treasures of hidden knowledge. Whenever any one in his presence introduced a discourse in dispraise of a man's character, either directly or indirectly, he had too much politeness to stop and reprimand him; but he would with great address, and peculiar felicity, turn the discourse to another subject, without giving the speaker the smallest offence. This venerable man died at the age of seventy."

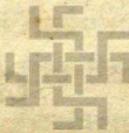
IN this strain does this amiable writer criticise his contemporary authors; men far inferior to himself, either in judgement, knowledge of the world, or even literature. Perhaps, it may be owing to this candour, and mildness of disposition, that he has treated some parts of the misconduct of the English, as magistrates, with so lenient a hand. He deems their conduct meritorious upon the whole, and their government advantageous; though the Mahomedans of rank, whom it has displaced from all the more lucrative official situations, are perhaps the only class of men whose circumstances it has injured.

ONE disadvantage arising from our situation in India, he has seen, and laments, which arises from the temporary residence of individuals in the country; and the proportionably small interest they can feel in its welfare. Men, he observes, who leave their native country with the sole view of acquiring

an independency, and then to return to it, can have little inducement to confer upon their temporary residence any permanent improvements. The meritorious business of planting topes, digging wells, making roads, and various employments suitable for the wealthy part of a community, individuals will seldom undertake in a country which they hope soon to leave. As the Europeans, according to our system, have not been allowed to colonize in India; there can be no doubt of the justice of Golam Hossein's remarks on this particular.

Of injustice and corruption, as judges, he entirely acquits our countrymen ; and of cruelty and oppression, as rulers, he brings not the slightest imputation : from his intimate acquaintance with this subject, and his bias, if he felt any, being wholly against us, we may applaud our countrymen for having obtained this honourable testimony of their character. From want of knowledge in the language, which frequently has happened to the junior servants, he does accuse them of sometimes suffering themselves to be imposed on by their bannians and sircars ; nor does he conceal that injustice is sometimes committed through their interference. Persian writings, and books, are not committed to the press and disseminated by publication as in Europe. This author's manuscripts, for many years, were handed about privately among the natives : he could therefore have no fear of giving offence to the English by what he brought forward. This is indeed apparent from

from many strictures he has written abundantly severe; nor does there seem any intention to please by flattery in a work that was never submitted to the perusal of the English: the praises of General God-dart, and of many other individuals to be found in these volumes, are no exception to this remark, since they are evidently the effusions of sincerity and gratitude; and some of them, as that of Mr Fullarton, were written long after the parties concerned had left the country. Without having any knowledge of civil liberty in the abstract, this author possessed the fullest enjoyment of it; and from this circumstance his testimony has become of so great importance.



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

OF

OF THE AYEEN ACBERY;

A Statistical Account of Hindostan during the Reign of Acber.

Caunpore, Jan. 1799.

Indira Gandhi National
THIS voluminous work is the production of the celebrated Vizier of Acber, Abulfazel, a minister equally renowned for his talents and integrity : he served his master with fidelity till the forty-seventh year of his reign ; at which period he was murdered by some banditti on his return from the Deccan. There are few countries, even the most civilized, who are in possession of so great a share of authentic information regarding their own internal policy, as this book contains. Of its estimation among the natives we have ample proof in the writings of Mahomed Shereeff Motamed Khan, who published about fifteen years after the death of Acber, the following character of Abulfazel's history.

" To

“ To the learned it is well known that Alamy Sheikh Abulfazel, by the command of the Emperor Jillaleddeen Mahommed Acber, wrote the history of that Monarch, from the commencement of his reign, till the time of his own death, and which he entitled *Acbernameh*. It is composed of three volumes : the first consists of a summary account of the Emperor’s ancestors ; the second volume contains the occurrences of Acber’s reign, from his accession to the throne, down to the 47th year, that in which the author died ; the third contains the Emperor’s institutes, which is entitled the *Ayeen Acbery*.” This last volume has lately been translated from the original Persian by Mr Gladwin, and is divided into three parts, containing the Emperor’s regulations for every department of government ; a historical and geographical description of the twelve viceroyalties of Hindostan ; and the work closes with a full account of the religion of the Hindoos, their writings, and the sects into which they are divided.

As a specimen of the manner in which the historical part of this volume is executed by the author, his account of the Soubah of Agra is selected : it contained the capital of the empire, and the place of the author’s nativity.

“ IT is situated in the second climate : in length from Gatimpoor, which bounds it on the side of Allahabad, to Pulwul, which bounds it on the side of Delhi : it measures 175 coss (350 miles), and its breadth

breadth is from Kinouge to Chundery, in Malwah. It is bounded on the east by Gatimpoor; on the west by Pulwul; on the north by the river Ganges; and on the south by Chundery.

“ IN this Soubah are many rivers; the chief of which are the Jown, (Jumna,) and the Chumbul. A great many situations in the southern mountains, parts of this Soubah, are remarkably pleasant and healthy. Agriculture is here in perfection; there is abundance of flowers, and sweet-scented oils; and very excellent betle leaf. They have melons and grapes, as fine as are produced in Iran and Turan.

“ AGRA is a large city, the air of which is esteemed very healthy. The river Jown runs through it for five coss; and on both sides are delightful houses, inhabited by people of all nations, and where are displayed the productions of every climate. His Majesty has erected a fort of red stone; the like of which no traveller has ever beheld*. It contains alone five hundred stone buildings of surprising construction, in the Bengal, Gujerat, and other stiles; and the artificers have decorated them with beautiful paintings. At the eastern gate, are carved in stone, two elephants, with their riders, of excellent workmanship.

“ IN

* Still in repair, and at present garrisoned by Dowlet Row Seindia's troops, under M. Perron.

" IN former times, Agra was a village dependent on Byaneh, where Sultan Jecunder Lowdy kept his court. Here his Majesty has founded a most magnificent city. On the opposite side of the river is the Charbagh, (four gardens,) a monument of the magnificence of the inhabitant of paradise *. The author of this book was born on that side of the river ; and there are the tombs of his ancestors, together with that of his elder brother Sheikh Fizu, and many other eminent persons are also interred there.

" NEAR the city of Agra, upon the banks of the river Jown, in a village called Rungleh, is a famous place of Hindoo worship.

" India Gandhi National
FUTTEH-POOR was formerly dependent on Byaneh, and then called Suckery. Upon Agra being made the seat of government, it also became a city : it is situated at the distance of twelve cos from the city of Agra. It has a stone fort, containing magnificent buildings, and over one of the gates are two astonishing elephants carved in stone. The royal palace, and the houses of the nobility, are built upon the mountain, but the plains are also decorated with many buildings and gardens. His Majesty has caused to be erected on the top of the mountain, a mosque, a college, and a monastery, for Sofees, which are the admiration of travellers. Adjoining

* Humayun, the king's father.

ing to the city is a lake, extending twelve cose, and upon the edge of it his Majesty has built an amphitheatre with high minarets. The amphitheatre is used for the game of Chowgong ; and here are also exhibited the elephant fights. In this neighbourhood is a quarry of red stone, out of which they cut slabs and pillars of any dimensions.

“ IN Agra they manufacture blankets, and fine stuffs ; and here are assembled artificers of every denomination.

“ BYANEH in former times was a capital city. It has a large fort containing many subterraneous caverns, where there are now found warlike instruments, and kitchen utensils ; and here is a very high tower. The mangos of this place are excellent ; and some of them weigh above two pounds. This town is famous for very white sugar : here is a well, with the water of which they knead the sugar into a paste like flour, and form it into cakes, which they call Gundoreh, and it is carried to great distances as a rarity ; for it cannot be made with any other water. The indigo of this place is very fine, selling from ten to sixteen rupees per maund. Excellent henna, of a high colour, is also to be procured here. This town is the burial place of many illustrious men. Toodeh Bheem is a place at the distance of three cose, where is a cave full of water, whose depth is unfathomable. Mines of copper, and torquoises have been found here ; but they will not defray the expence

expence of being worked. Mehterah is a city upon the banks of the river Jown, where are many idolatrous temples, to which the Hindoos resort.

“ CALPEE is also a city on the banks of the Jown, and where are the tombs of many great personages. Very good sugar is to be procured here. At the time that the Sherkian dynasty first established themselves, the princes of Calpee were tributary to Delhi. When Kudder Khan, who governed here, rebelled, Sultan Howshing came from Malwah, received his submission, and then reinstated him in his government. Sultan Mahmood, of the Sherkian dynasty, took it from Nuffer Khan, the son of Kudder Khan.

“ KINUUGE was ^{Indira Gandhi National} in ancient times the capital city of Hindostan *.

“ GUALIOR is a famous fort, in which there are many stately buildings; and there is a stone elephant over the gate. The air and water of this place are both esteemed good. It has always been celebrated for fine singers and beautiful women.

“ ALLORE has considerable manufactures of woollen carpets, and glaſs. At Beeral are several copper

* The ruins are still extant; they extend over a space of fifteen miles.

copper mines so profitable, that out of a maunde of ore, they extract thirty-five feers of metal. Here has also been discovered a silver mine, but it is not worth working.

“ NEAR the mountains of Narnole, is a well which the Hindoos worship : and when the Titte Amavus * happens upon a Friday, the water flows over at sun rise.

“ THERE are also copper mines at Singonoh Dadypoor, and at Kotepotely : and at the town of Kanwery are many cold and hot springs.

“ THIS Soubah contains thirteen sircars, subdivided into two hundred and three pergunnahs. The measured lands are two crore seventy-eight lacks of biggahs, and eighteen biswahs. The amount of revenue is sixty-four crore, sixty-two lacks, fifty thousand, three hundred and four dams ; or in Sicca rupees, 16,156,257 ; of which there are of Seyurgal, one crore, twenty-one lacks, five thousand, seven hundred and three dams ; Sicca rupees 255,392. This Subah furnishes 50,600 cavalry ; 577,570 infantry, and 221 elephants.”

IT

* The last division of the month corresponding to the thirteenth day ; this space corresponds with twelve degrees of the moon's progress.

It may be observed of this account, that some articles exceed, while others fall short of the contributions levied on the rest of the empire. Six hundred thousand troops, allowing an equal number for the other eleven Soubahs, would bring the imperial army to seven millions two hundred thousand men; while we find by the same author that its actual amount did not reach five millions.

IF the military contribution levied on the Soubah of Agra, exceeds that of the other portions of the empire, the money assessment falls much below it, though we should have expected a different result, since wealth naturally flows to the seat of government. The sum afforded by this province is only two millions of our money, which gives for the twelve Soubahs, an assessment of twenty-four millions. We find, however, that the usual revenue, during the reign of Acber, amounted to thirty-six millions sterling; a sum moderate, when compared to the extent and population of the Mogul empire.

THE revenue here given in the gross, is detailed in an after part of the work, entitled Tuckseem Jumma, (assessment of land,) where the total sum is distributed among each separate mahl, and district of the country.

As nearly a third part of the Mogul Empire is at present under the protection of the British government, it cannot fail to strike the English reader that

a vast saving of hands is afforded to agriculture and manufactures by the introduction of European discipline among the native troops, and the consequent reduction of their number. On the same scale with the Mogul establishment, our army in India should amount to two millions ; but a more correct discipline has enabled us to execute the same service, and in a much more effectual manner, by a twentieth part of the number of men. This, however, is by no means the only immediate advantage resulting from European conquests in India. War is a much more rare occurrence now than formerly : when it does happen, it is carried on to a conclusion in less time, and with more humanity ; while the grand purpose of an army, the protection of life and property, is secured in a degree superior beyond all comparison. When the English army first entered the province of Behar, against the present Emperor, we have the testimony of a native author of high consideration, “ that they hardly injured a blade of grass * ;” and if, in subsequent times, they have been guilty of irregularities, these will bear no comparison with the evils invariably attendant on the presence of a native army.

OF

* Golam Hossein Khan, in his Seir Mutakhareen.

OF TRADES AND PROFESSIONS AS PRACTISED AMONG
THE NATIVES OF INDIA.

• • • • •

Caunpore, Jan. 1798.

THREE causes have been assigned for the small progress made by the Oriental nations in the arts; the tyranny of their despotic governments; the enervating heat of the climate; and their attachment to ancient usages. By a reflecting mind, however, these will be found easily reducible to the second; for if the energies of body and mind are injured by the effects of climate, despotism, the most simple of all forms of government, will of consequence arise; and custom will become naturally a guide when the powers of intellect are weak.

THE present state of almost all the arts, compared with the ancient monuments of them which still remain, demonstrates that they have long continued stationary, and offers a strong presumption that they

never will be carried to a very high degree of perfection. Unfortunately the art of government has always been the least perfect of any ; as administered by the Indian princes, it has never afforded a steady encouragement to the sciences, nor any adequate rewards to their professors. Educated in the sloth and ignorance of a seraglio, the sovereigns of India could not appreciate in their subjects qualities of which they were destitute themselves : they were accustomed to pay their artists by the day, like the meanest mechanic ; and their scholars, if they had any, were suffered to live and die in the same miserable obscurity, as if they had handled the spade or the plough. If ever their pleasures assumed a more manly complexion, still it was only one trade that they encouraged : war was their profession, and properly their plunder.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

WHAT is said, by a good observer, of the state of painting among the Hindcos, is applicable in a great measure to the other arts ; they are conducted by no scientific principles ; and the effect produced, is the result of patient exactness, or a happy *knack*, rather than of a well conceived design. “ La peinture chez les Indiens est, et sera toujours dans l'enfance : ils trouvent admirable un tableau chargé de rouge et de bleu, et dont les personnages sont vêtus d'or. Ils n'entendent point le clair obscur, n'arrondissent jamais les objets, et ne savent pas les mettre en perspective ;

spective ; en un mot leurs meilleures peintures ne font que de mauvaises enluminures *.”

PERHAPS their painted cloths are more indebted to the brilliancy of the colours, and the goodness of the water, than any skill of the artist, for that admiration with which they have been viewed. It must be acknowledged, that some of our European naturalists have found excellent draftsmen among the natives, who have executed drawings of many specimens of natural history, with much neatness and accuracy. The laborious exactness with which they imitate every feather of a bird, or the smallest fibre on the leaf of a plant, renders them valuable assistants in this department ; but farther than this they cannot advance one step : if your bird is to be placed on a rock, or upon the branch of a tree, the draftsman is at a stand ; the object is not before him ; and his imagination can supply nothing. Sculpture among the Hindoos, labours under the same imperfection, with painting : the numberless statues which we see in their temples, are poorly designed, and worse executed ; nor do these religious edifices impress the mind with a more favourable idea of the architecture, than the sculpture of India. The columns and pillars which adorn their immense pagodas, are destitute of any fixed proportions, and the edifices themselves are subjected to no rules of architecture.

The

* Voyages de Sonnerat aux Indes, Tom. 1st, p. 99.

The celebrated mausoleum at Agra, commonly called the Tage Mahl, which has so often been described by travellers, has little to boast of, either in simplicity or elegance of design. The immensity of its size, its costly ornaments, and the minute exactness of its decorations, in particular parts, are worthy of notice; but they afford much stronger proofs of the wealth and magnificence of Shah Jehan, than the correctness of his taste. In China, Egypt, and India, where a numerous population, plenty of provisions, and despotic power, in the hands of a single person, have enabled the monarchs to execute works, in extent, far more vast than those in Europe, that circumstance, however, cannot establish their claim to equal proficiency in the arts, nor to the same skill in the principles of science.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

If we are to judge merely from the number of instruments, and the frequency with which they apply them, the Hindoos might be regarded as considerable proficients in music, yet has the testimony of all strangers deemed it equally imperfect as the other arts. Their warlike instruments are rude, noisy, and inartificial: and in the temples, those employed for the purposes of religion, are managed apparently on the same principle; for, in their idea, the most pleasant and harmonious, is that which makes the loudest noise. In this country, music, or rather noise, is a necessary adjunct of wealth and dignity: the beating of the Nagari (great drum) is the emblem of sovereign power; and the various delegations

legations of it are typified by some particular instruments. The different classes of jugglers, and particularly those who charm serpents, make use of an instrument which they call *magondi*; by the sound of which they not only make them dance, but charm them out of the houses, put them into baskets, and carry them about as an exhibition to amuse the people. It is generally the same class of strollers who perform feats of dexterity and legerdemain, in order to collect money from the crowds who follow them; and it must be allowed, that in these feats the Hindoos excel all mankind.

THE Hindoo tradesmen of all descriptions, are characterised by the simplicity of their tools, the smallness of their number, and by the want of all complex machinery. In the manufacture of fine muslin, in which they excel all the world, the wheel, the reel, and the loom, are of a simple and artless structure, yet the work produced cannot be equalled by European machinery, aided by every effort of ingenuity and skill. This, however, is perhaps the only manufacture in which the superior art and capital of Europeans has not yet enabled them to surpass their teachers; for in the common price goods, all the variety and elegance of pattern is of British origin.

THE articles furnished by the black smith, silver and gold smiths, cannot be compared either in strength or elegance with the productions of Europe,

rope, though they surprise by the inefficiency of the tools by which they are fabricated. The brazier and blacksmith generally carry about with them their scanty stock of implements, consisting of little more than a hammer, a file, and pair of tongs, with a bellows : the forge is soon constructed, the anvil being frequently a stone ; and when the work is finished, they pack up their utensils, and set out in quest of a new employer. The carpenter has seldom any instrument beyond the saw, the hammer, the chisel, and an ill contrived adze : the ground is his bench, and his foot holds the wood ; but the work which occupies him a month would be completed by our workmen in three or four days.

IN all the more laborious professions, the want of proper implements and machinery is still more sensibly felt : the thrashing and grinding of corn are tedious and severe processes in rural labour, which the Hindoo ingenuity has made no effectual effort to shorten or facilitate. A water mill, or steam-engine, guided by a single person, performs in one day, more than the labour of an hundred women, at the hand mill : and it is probable that the invention of machinery has abridged the tedious labour of spinning cotton to less than a fiftieth part.

IN naval architecture, as a science, the Orientals were totally deficient on the first arrival of Europeans ; in its practice as an art, they were slow and awkward. This employment requiring the united appli-

application of skill and machinery, and hard labour, the work of a single carpenter is equal to that of ten natives ; his wages, however, are in the same proportion, and ship-building is nearly of equal expence whether executed by European or native labour. The business of ship-building affords a happy illustration of the mutual benefit derived from their intercourse by these two races of men. European capital and skill, has enabled the Hindoos to build many of the best ships that navigate the sea, who formerly could execute nothing superior to the wretched craft that had for twenty centuries plied upon the Ganges. The warm climate of India would have rendered the knowledge of Europeans useless and inefficient, unless they had been supplied with operative hands habituated to these tropical regions.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE different occupations of tanners, leather sellers, and shoemakers, equally demonstrate the imperfection of the Indian artists, and the benefit they have received from their intercourse with Europe. Formerly these tradesmen were treated as the vilest and most worthless of human beings : they had no implements, but their last and their knife ; no provision of leather, or stock of goods : whoever needed a pair of shoes, had to pay the price in advance to the tradesman, who bought the animal whose hide was to furnish the material. So ill conducted was the whole process, that in a few days he prepared the leather, and delivered the shoes. Their working in leather, and eating of flesh, has, in the eyes of the

Hin-

Hindoos, cast a degree of infamy upon their cast which no effort of Europeans can remove : they are still ranked among the most degraded of men ; and dwell in huts separate from the towns and villages ; but new processes in tanning have been introduced, and shoes are manufactured by them nearly equal to those imported from Europe, and at one third of the price. The countenance of Europeans being withheld by no prejudice against their profession, it is possible that their humiliating condition has been in some degree softened of its rigour.

THE watering of land in a hot climate, is an operation equally necessary, as it is laborious and fatiguing : in no part of India is this work much abridged by machinery ; in many parts it is drawn from wells by the <sup>India Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts</sup> strength of cattle ; in others it is lifted from reservoirs by human labour, by the most inartificial method. A common basket, made watertight with a sort of pitch, is attached to a rope, and swung by two men, one on each side, holding the rope ; in one part of the circumference it describes, it is filled with water, which is emptied as it ascends to a higher elevation. This is far more laborious, and less effectual than the water wheels of the Chinese ; which, awkwardly as they are constructed, raise many tuns of water in the space of a few hours.

THE STATE OF MARRIED WOMEN AMONG THE
MAHOMMEDANS.

• • • • •

Caupore, Jan. 1798.

OF this important part of domestic economy among Asiatics, Europeans are, notwithstanding all that has been written upon the subject, worse informed than of any other. The very name of the apartments destined for the residence of married women, Haram, (forbidden), implies the exclusion of all strangers, particularly males, from these abodes. Our medical gentlemen, (and even with them the occurrence is very rare), are the only persons ever suffered to approach the dwelling of a married woman of rank: when in case of any dangerous illness a physician is applied to, he is only permitted to approach the door of the apartment, which is covered with a screen, and there he must prescribe without seeing her, according to the replies he receives to his enquiries relating to her complaint. Hence the various rel-

tions, regarding the privileges, customs, and employment of Asiatic females, are generally the offspring of the narrator's vanity, and may be regarded as destitute of truth and accuracy, since the writers enjoyed no opportunity of better information. Of the general fact, only, the seclusion of all females of rank, an European can decide; and when he urges the advantages of a freer intercourse on the female character, he can speak on no subject on which he is less likely to persuade. To a Mussulman, our notions regarding the treatment of females, always appear absurd, and ridiculous; and he seldom seems more satisfied with his wisdom, than when he expatiates on the bad consequences which are sometimes the result of them.

IT was in a conversation on this subject, with a learned Mussulman, who lately visited England, that we are indebted for "A Vindication of the Liberties of Asiatic Women," written in Persian by Abu Taleb Khan, a native of Lucknow, in the province of Owde. This paper, the production of a learned Asiatic, upon this interesting subject, has been translated, and preserved in the Asiatic Annual Register, as a more authentic document, than perhaps the public are yet in possession of, relating to the married state of the Orientalists.

"ONE day, says Abul Taleb, in a certain company, the conversation turned upon *liberty*, in respect of which the English consider their own customs

toms as the most perfect in the world. An English lady, addressing herself to me, observed, that the women of Asia had no liberty at all, but live like slaves, without honour, and without authority, in the houses of their husbands ; and she censured the men for their unkindness, and the women also, for submitting to be so undervalued. However much I attempted, by various ways, to undeceive her, by observing, that the truth is exactly the reverse, (for it is the European women who do not possess so much power), yet it did not bring conviction to her mind. She, however, began to waver in her own opinion, and falling into doubt, requested of me to write something on the subject, the purport of which she might comprehend at one view, and be enabled to distinguish the truth from falsehood.

Indira Gandhi National Library

“ SINCE the same wrong opinion is deeply rooted in the minds of all other Europeans, and has been frequently held forth, I considered it necessary to write a few lines concerning the privileges of the female sex, as established both by law and custom, in Asia, and in Europe, omitting whatever was common to both, and noticing what is peculiar to each, in the manner of comparison, that the distinction may be the more easily made, and the real state of the case become evident to those capable of discernment.

“ It must first be laid down as a general maxim, that in social order, respect to the rules of politeness, and

and forbearance from injury, is a necessary condition ; for, otherwise, the liberty of one would be destructive of the liberty of another : thus, if a person be at liberty to do in his own house what may endanger the safety of his neighbour's, this must be direct opposition to the liberty of that neighbour ; or, if in order to free himself from the inconvenience of the hot weather, he should visit his friend in his dressing gown, or night shirt, although it would be ease and liberty to him, yet it would be sowing the seeds of ill-breeding ; therefore the observance of these rules is essential.

“ THOSE things which make the liberty of the Asiatic women appear less than that of the Europeans, are in my opinion six : *First*, The little intercourse with men, ^{Indra Gandhi National Library} and concealment from view, agreeable to law, and their own habits ; and this is the chief of the whole ; for it has been the cause of those false notions entertained by European women, that the inclination of the Asiatic females leads them to walk out in the streets, and market places, and that their husbands keep them shut up, and set guards upon their door. It may be here observed, that the advantages of this *little* intercourse, which prevents all the evils from the admittance of strangers, and affords so much time for employment and useful work, are so very manifest, that they need not be enlarged upon : the practice in London of keeping the doors of the houses shut, and the contemptible condition of the Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope,

are

are sufficient proofs. If, notwithstanding this, the custom of the intercourse of the sexes is allowed in England, it is owing both to the force of custom, and good morals among the English, and to the apprehension of greater inconveniences in the contrary practice. The chief of these inconveniences are four; first the high price of all things, and the small number of servants, and rooms; for were there a separate house and table, and equipage for the wife, the expence would be too great to be borne; and therefore of necessity both husband and wife eat their food, with their guests in one place, sleep together in the same chamber; and cannot avoid being always in each other's company: whereas in Asia, where by the cheapness of work, the women have separate apartments for themselves, they have not to make their time and convenience suit that of their husbands. When their particular friends are with them, they do not desire their husband's company for several days, but send his viuctuals to him in the murdannah, (men's apartment); and, in like manner, when the husband wishes to be undisturbed, he eats and sleeps in the murdannah.

" A second reason for this intercourse in England is, the coldness of the climate, which requires exercise and walking, and the husband to sleep in the same bed with his wife: but concealment from view is incompatible with walking; and as for the second case, the want of room is the cause: for it is natural for mankind, when under distress and affliction of mind,

to

to wish frequently for retirement and privacy, - by sleeping alone.

" A third cause is, the people here being all of one race ; for in this kingdom, placed in a corner of the globe, where there is no coming nor going of foreigners, the intercourse of the sexes is not attended with the same consequences of a corruption of manners, as in Asia, where people of various nations dwell in the same city ; and to allow the women such a liberty there, where there is such danger of corruption, would be an encroachment upon the liberty of the men, which (as shewn in the beginning) is contrary to justice. That a corruption of manners must ensue, where various kinds of people mix together, is too evident to need demonstration. Before the Mussulmans entered Hindostan, the women did not conceal themselves from view ; and even now, in all the Hindoo villages, it is not customary : and it is well known how inviolable the Hindoos preserve their own customs, and how obstinately they are attached to them : but now so rigidly do women in the great towns observe this practice of concealment from view, that the bride does not even shew herself to her father-in-law, and the sister comes but seldom into the presence of her brother.

" A fourth cause of the custom in Europe is, the necessity which the women there have to acquire experience in the affairs of the world, and to learn various arts on account of the duty laid upon them of taking

taking part in their husband's business. This experience could not be obtained by keeping in concealment; whereas the duties of Asiatic women consisting only in having the custody of the husband's property, and bringing up the children, they have no occasion for such experience, or for laying aside their own custom of concealment. What has been just said, was to shew that the Asiatic women have no necessity to expose their persons; but it must also be observed that they have many reasons for preferring privacy. One is the love of leisure, and repose from the fatigue of motion; a second, their desire of preserving their honour by not mixing with the vulgar, nor suffering the insults of the low and rude, who are always passing along the streets. This feeling they have in common with the wives of European noblemen, who, to preserve their dignity, are never seen walking on the streets; and also with ladies in private life, who, when walking out at night, and even in the day, are always attended by a male friend, or servant, who protects them.

“ THE notion which the European women have, that the women of Asia never see a man's face but their husband's, and are debarred from all amusement and society, proceeds entirely from misinformation: they can keep company with their husband's and father's male relations, and with old neighbours and domestics; and at meals there are always many men and women of this description present: and they can go in palankeens to the houses

houses of their relations, and of ladies of their own rank, even though the husbands are unacquainted ; and also to walk in the gardens, after strangers are excluded ; and they can send for musicians, and dancers [to entertain them at their own houses ; and they have many other modes of amusement besides those mentioned.

" THE second cause why the liberty of Asiatic women appears less than that of Europeans is, the privilege of the husband, by law, to marry several wives. This, to the European women, seems a grievous oppression ; and they hold those very cheap who submit to it. But, in truth, the cause of this law and custom is the nature of the female sex themselves, which separates them from the husband, the several last months of pregnancy, and time of suckling ; and besides these the Asiatic women have many other times of being separate from their husbands. This privilege not being allowed by the English law, is indeed a great hardship upon the English husbands ; whereas the Asiatic law permitting polygamy, does the husband justice, and wrongs not the wife ; for the honour of the first, and *equal* wife is not affected by it : those women who submit to marry with a married man, not being admitted into the society of ladies, as they are never of high or wealthy families, no man of honour ever allowing his daughter to make such a marriage.

" THE mode in which these other wives live is this ; those who are of genteel extraction, have a separate house for themselves, like kept mistresses in England ; and those who are not, live in the house of the equal wife, like servants, and the husband at times conveys himself to them in a clandestine manner. Besides, these wives cannot invade any of the rights of the equal wife ; for although they and their children are by law entitled to inheritance, yet since the equal wife never marries without a very large dowry settled upon her, all that the husband leaves goes to the payment of this dowry, and nothing remains for his heirs. The opinion, that the men of Asia have three or four wives, is very ill-founded, for in common they have only one ; out of a thousand there will be fifty persons who have from one to two, and ten out of these who have not more than two. The fear of the bad consequences of polygamy makes men submit with patience to the times of separation from the equal wife, as much the better way ; for, from what I know, it is easier to live with two tygresses than two wives.

" THE third cause, is the power of divorce being in the hands of the husband. This is ordained by law, but not practised ; for if a great offence be the motive to divorce a wife, and if it be proved against her, she receives punishment by the order of the magistrate, or from the husband, with the concurrence of all her relations ; and if the offence be of a trivial nature, such as a difference of temper and insociability,

lity, the husband punishes her by leaving the female apartment, and living in his own. But the reason for divorce being at the will of the husband, lies in the very justice of the law, and the distinction of the male sex over the female, on account of the greater share they take in the management of the world; for all the laborious work falls to their lot, such as carrying heavy burdens, going to war, repulsing enemies, &c. and the women generally spend their lives in repose and quiet. Nevertheless, if a wife establish a criminal offence against her husband, such as an unfair distribution of his time among them, or a diminution of the necessaries of life, she can obtain a divorce in spite of him.

“ THE fourth is, the little credit the law attaches to the evidence of women in Asia; for, in a court of justice, every fact is proved by the testimony of two men; but if women be the witnesses, four are required. This does not arise from the superiority of the one over the other, but it is founded on the little experience and knowledge women possess, and the fickleness of their disposition.

“ THE fifth is, the Asiatic women having to leave off going to balls and entertainments, and wearing shewy dresses and ornaments, after the death of their husbands. This is owing to their great affection for their husbands' memory; and their own modes and habits; for there is nothing to prevent a woman from doing otherwise, or marrying a second husband, but the

the dread of exposing herself to the ridicule and censure of women of her own rank.

" THE sixth is, the Asiatic daughters not having the liberty of choosing their husbands. On this head nothing need be said; for in Europe this liberty is merely nominal, since without the will of the father and mother the daughter's choice is of no avail; and in its effects, it serves only to encourage running away (as the male and female slaves in India do), and to breed coldness and trouble among the members of a family. But granting that such a liberty does exist in England, the despair and misery it must always entail are very evident. The choice of a girl just come from the nursery, and desirous by nature to get a husband, in an affair upon which the happiness of her whole life depends, can neither deserve that respect nor consideration which is due to the choice of her parents, who have profited by experience, and are not blinded by passion.

" BUT what the Asiatic women have more than the European, both by law and custom, may be ranked under eight heads: " First, Their power over the property and children of the husband by custom; for the men of Asia consider the principal object of marriage, after the procreation of their own species for the worship of God, two things, the one to have their money and effects taken care of, and the other to have their children brought up, so that they themselves being entirely disengaged of these concerns,

may

may turn the whole of their endeavours to the attainment of their various pursuits. The chief part, therefore, of whatever wealth they may acquire, they give in charge to their wives, and thus the women have it in their power to annihilate in one day, the product of a whole life. Although this seldom happens, yet it often occurs, that the husband who has amassed a large fortune in youth and power, and has delivered it in charge to his wife, when he demands it back in old age and necessity, she does not allow him more than daily support, and lays the rest up in a place of security for the sake of her children. And so great is the power they possess, as to the disposal of their children, that frequently they are brought up without any education, or die in childhood ; for the women, on account of their little sense, are never pleased to part with their children, by sending them to school, and to acquire experience by travelling ; and when they fall sick, they give them improper medicines, by the advice of their own confidents ; or, from their softness of heart, indulge them in whatever it is the nature of the sick to take a longing for, and thus they cause their death.

“ SECOND, Their power by custom, as to the marriage of their children, and choice of their religious faith ; for if the husband wishes to give one of them in marriage to a person the mother disapproves of, the match does not take place, but in the other way it generally does. All the children, both male and female, from being mostly in the company of the mother,

mother, and looking upon her as their protector against the father, whom, on account of his wishing to have them educated, they consider as their tormentor, follow the religious tenets of their mother, and remain perfect strangers to those of their father. It often happens where the wife is a Schiah, and the husband a Sounie, the children having been Schias from their own natural disposition, and the instruction of the mother, speak disrespectfully of the chiefs of the Sounie sect, in their father's presence; and he who never all his life bore such language from any person, but was ready to put the speaker of it to death, has no redress but patiently to hear it from them, as, on account of their want of understanding, they are excuseable: and thus by frequent repetition, his attachment to his faith is shaken, and in the course of time, he either forsakes it entirely, or remains in it with Lukewarmness.

“ THIRD, Their authority over their servants; for the servants of the Murdannah, the keeping and changing of whom is in the hands of the husband, through fear of exposing themselves to the displeasure of the wife, when she finds a proper opportunity, by their committing some fault, which servants are constantly doing, are more obedient to her, than their own masters: and the servants of the Zenana, whom the wife has the care of retaining, or turning off, stand so much in awe of their mistress, that many of them pass their whole lives in the Zenana, without ever once coming into the presence of the husband. Some

of them never perform any service for him at all, and others who do, enter not into discourse with him; and the women are so obstinate in this respect, that their husbands never can turn off one of the servants, but his very complaint against them is a recommendation; and his recommendation has the effect of a complaint, by subjecting them to their mistress's resentment.

“ CONTRARY to this is the manner of the European ladies, who have not their own will with their children and servants, but live more like free and familiar guests in their husbands' houses; and the household establishment and equipage being common to both, if any part, as the carriage, for example, is previously employed by the one, the other has to wait till it is disengaged: of this there is no doubt, that if a quarrel ensues between an English husband and wife, the wife has to leave the house, and seek her dinner, either at her father's, or a friend's; whereas in Asia, it is the husband who has to go out; for frequently the utensils of cookery are not kept in the murdannah.

“ FOURTH, The freedom, by custom, of the Asiatic women from assisting in the business of the husband, or service of his guests; whereas this is generally the business of European wives, whether their husbands be of a genteel business, such as jewellery, mercery, or perfumery, or the more servile ones; I have seen many rise from their dinner to answer the demands

demands of a purchaser: and although all these duties are not required of the ladies, yet some, especially the entertaining of the guests, carving and helping the dishes at table, and making the tea and coffee are generally performed by them. Now the Asiatic ladies have no such duties at all; but live in the manner before described.

"FIFTH, The greater deference the Asiatic ladies find paid to their humours, and prescriptive right of teasing their husbands by every pretext, which is considered as an essential quality of beauty: for if a wife does not put these in practice, but is submissive to her husband's will in every thing, her charms very soon lose their brilliancy in his eyes. Thus when a wife goes to visit her father, she will not return to her husband, till he has come himself several times to fetch her; and being as often vexed by her breaking her promise. And every day when dinner is served, by pretending to be engaged at the time, she keeps her husband waiting, and does not come till the meat is cold; and in the same manner, at bed-time; for returning quickly from their father's house, is considered as a sign of fondness for the husband, which looks ill, as they think; and coming soon to dinner, in their opinion, betrays the disposition of a hungry beggar. In these and such cases, the husband has nothing for it but patience; nay, it ever pleases him. I have known many beautiful women, constant in their affection, and obedient to their husbands night and day, whom for want of these qualities, their husbands

bands quickly grew tired of, and unjustly deserted, for the sake of plain women who possessed them.

“ **SIXTH,** The greater reliance placed by the Asiatic husbands in their wives’ virtue, both from law and custom. Although European ladies can go out of doors, and discourse with strangers, yet this is not allowed, unless they have a trusty person along with them, either of the husband’s or the father’s; and sleeping out all night is absolutely denied them. The Asiatic ladies, on the contrary, when they go to the house of a lady of their acquaintance, though their husbands be entire strangers, are not attended by any person of the husband’s or father’s, and they spend not only one or two nights in that house, but even a whole week: and in such a house, though the master is prohibited from entering the apartments where they are, yet the young men of fifteen, belonging to the family or relations, under the name of children, have free access, and eat with and enter into the amusements of their guests.

“ **SEVENTH,** Their share in the children by law. For if a divorce happens, the sons go to the father, and the daughters to the mother, contrary to the custom in England, where if a divorce happens, the mother, who for twenty years may have toiled and consumed herself in bringing up her children, has to abandon all to the father, and full of grief and affliction, leave his house.

“ **EIGHTH,**

"EIGHTH, The case both by law and custom, with which the wife may separate herself from her husband, when there may be a quarrel between them, without producing a divorce. Thus the wife, in an hour's time after the dispute, sets off with the children and her property to the house of her father, or relations, and until her husband makes her satisfaction she does not return: and this she can always do without a moment's delay.

"BESIDES these eight, as above noticed, of the superior advantages the Asiatic women enjoy over the European, there are many others here omitted for brevity's sake. What has been said is enough for people of discernment*."

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

S f

DESCRIPTION

* Abu Taleb is a man of high rank and character, and has been employed in situations of great trust by the government of Owde, and by the Marquis Cornwallis: he is better acquainted with the subject than any European can pretend to be; yet as he seems to have a *case* to make out in this vindication of the rights of Asiatic wives, he is probably not to be believed to the full extent of every assertion, though upon the whole a credible evidence.

DESCRIPTION OF AN EUROPEAN CANTONMENT.

.....

Caunpore, Jan. 1798.

THIS is the largest military station in this part of India ; and may be regarded as the head-quarters of the field army in the pay of the Nabob Vizier. The buildings erected at the public expence, are barracks for the European infantry, cavalry, and artillery, with a general hospital for the reception of the sick. These are conducted with economy and neatness, after a regular plan, and are perhaps better adapted for the service, than the more expensive erections at Dinapore, Barhampore, and the Presidency. The officers of every description, provide their own lodgings, which consist of very commodious and elegant Bungalows, built without any regularity, on a space extending about six miles along the Ganges.

EACH

EACH Bungalow, with its garden, out-houses, and appendages, is called an estate, in the purchase of which, and in the position of his buildings, every individual was left to consult his taste, convenience, or caprice. You can therefore expect no regularity or arrangement in the cantonments : what is still more inconvenient, the buildings are so much scattered and detached, that they cannot be protected against thieves by all the troops they contain. Each proprietor of a house is obliged to hire a number of *Chokedars* (watchmen) proportioned to his property, and upon these terms only can he depend on protection. These watchmen are enrolled under a chief, and are either thieves themselves, or so intimately connected with the profession, that they are found by experience to be the best qualified to detect them. One thing is pretty certain, NAMAM whoever pays the Chokedars is secure ; Centre for the Arts whoever neglects to hire them is plundered.

CAUNPORE is situated in the upper part of that vast plain, which extends from the bay of Bengal to the mountains of Thibet ; an immense valley far surpassing the extent of Egypt, and probably unequalled in any part of the globe. The soil is not only all arable, but, with proper cultivation, capable of being rendered extremely fertile. A most essential branch of husbandry is watering ; and for this purpose the wells are innumerable. You cannot ride out in any direction without meeting with so great numbers,

numbers, that accidents are not unfrequent of horses tumbling into them with their riders.

ANOTHER annoyance of the troops at this station, and which they cannot possibly avoid, is the dust towards the close of the dry season. From the middle of October till the middle of June, there is seldom a single shower of rain. The ground becomes parched to a cinder; and all vegetation except on the watered fields is destroyed. The tread of horses, camels, and bullocks, loosens each day a certain quantity of dust upon the surface, which the hot winds beginning regularly to blow in the afternoon, raise into the air in the form of a thick cloud, which not only hides the sun, but envelopes the whole station in midnight darkness. At this season, contending warriors are first discernible to each other by the clouds of dust which hover above them; nor can an individual of either be distinguished till they are almost in contact, when the artillery and musketry has the appearance of thunder bursting from a cloud. The history of the country affords many instances of battles lost or won by the direction of the dust; a windward position gives an army an advantage somewhat similar to the weather gage in an action at sea.

To inhale into the lungs for several months together an atmosphere loaded with dust, must prove hurtful as well as disagreeable; yet neither the Hindoos nor Mahomedans have fallen upon any contrivance

trivance to remedy this evil. Before the arrival of the Europeans there was not a house in all India furnished with glass windows ; even at present, when glass is so common here, I believe none of the natives have availed themselves of so obvious a remedy. Glass is considered by the Europeans as an indispensable requisite in the construction of every Bungalow at the upper stations : they have even introduced the use of it into the camp. Several officers carry, on their march, a frame of glass, which they fix in the windward door of their tents, during the hot winds, should the service call them into the field at that season.

IT has been proposed to protect this cantonment, by drawing a kind of rampart from the Ganges at the upper bank, to the lower end of the station ; a line of about six miles in length. Against an enemy this would prove hardly any defence ; from the thieves it would probably afford still less protection, since the far greater part of them are justly suspected of residing within the cantonments. It would however protect the native huts from the incursions of the wolf, an animal from which they suffer frequent and dreadful alarms. Hardly a night passes in which they do not dash into some corner of the camp, where their purpose is to carry off the children that may be found straggling near the huts ; and it is painful to reflect how often they are successful. Their strength enables them to carry off a child of three or four years, though closely pursued by the parents,

parents, who are pierced with the cries of their child without any possibility of affording it relief. The inhabitants of the south of Europe are much annoyed by the wolf, but in India he is far more destructive; because here the audacity of every predatory animal is increased by the experience they all have of the aversion that the Hindoos entertain to the shedding of even the blood of noxious beasts. If they are ever roused to ensnare these animals, it is by the Europeans who pay them a certain sum for bringing them alive for the purpose of affording them sport in the chace.

THE method in which the natives defend their crop from the granivorous animals, shews how strongly their religious prejudices operate in this particular. The watchmen are provided with no offensive weapons, excepting a sling; on the contrary, they continue the whole day standing in one single position upon a pillar of clay raised about ten feet, where they remain bellowing continually, that they may terrify, without hurting, the birds who feed upon the crop. Every considerable field contains several such sentinels stationed at different corners, who repeat the call from one to another so incessantly, that the invaders have hardly any opportunity of making good a livelihood in the field.

THE occupation of watching a field in India, must prove, one should imagine, one of the most tedious and disagreeable in which a human being could be

be placed. To stand for days and months exposed naked to a vertical sun, without the power of moving six inches from the spot, is a state compared to which a prison in England may be regarded as affording the luxury of a prince. Yet how many thousands here are doomed to limit their intellectual and bodily enjoyments to this narrow sphere ; and what is still more surprising with apparent contentment. The wants of nature are here few ; and the mental exertions necessary to supply them, however small, are sufficient to occupy a mind, enlarged but a little beyond that of a brute.

THE real wants of nature, whatever they may be, must be supplied : the foxes have holes ; the birds have nests ; so our field watchmen are forced during the rains to erect, instead of a clay pillar, a scaffolding of wood as high as the crop, over which they suspend a roof of straw to shelter their naked bodies from the rain. This though constructed with much less labour and ingenuity, than many animals display in preparing their dwelling, has the same effect ; it protects them from the inclemency of the elements to which they must otherwise fall a sacrifice. These watchmen are entertained over and above the complement of herdsmen for the cattle, and their number is much greater. Experience must have ascertained their use ; to an European it would appear that, as birds must have support, they probably snatch that support from these watches either by day or during the night : to him therefore it

it appears superfluous to resist demands that one way or other must be satisfied.

A concourse of Europeans in any part of the country, always draws after it a proportional number of natives ; a battalion cannot march in any direction without an accompanyment of camp followers thrice its own number. Ten thousand soldiers stationed for any considerable time, will bring a population of five times that amount to their neighbourhood. Merchants, tradesmen, and servants of every denomination, find their account in following the train ; and no inconsiderable portion of the pay of the army reverts to the same source from which it was drawn, to the former for cattle, grain, and vegetables, and to the artificer for his labour.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

HENCE agriculture in the vicinity of Caunpore, has profited by the stimulus of an European market, and high prices. Not only Indian corn, but gram, barley and wheat are cultivated to an extent equal to the demand. Turnips, cabbages, and European vegetables, are at this season in great abundance, not only in the gardens of officers, but in the fields cultivated by the natives. Grapes, peaches, with a profusion of fruit, have long since been supplied by the Europeans. The culture of the grape in India requires care, and appears to be of European extraction.

THE sugar plantations are neither numerous nor extensive; I suppose from the want of consumpt in this interior situation. The few fields I have seen are remarkably abundant, and rich: the crop is at present nearly ripe, and nothing can evince the fertility of the soil more strongly, than the comparison of the sugar with the adjoining crops; the former though tall, and so thick, as to render it impenetrable to the rays of the sun, is yet far surpassed by the juar, and palma christi, which here rise to the height of ten or twelve feet. Nothing in nature can surpass in luxuriance a country covered with such crops; but unfortunately cultivation is here frequently interrupted by the intervention of extensive wastes resembling the large commons in England. These are at this season scorched to barrenness, every particle of verdure being burnt up, nothing meets the eye except barren sand or dust floating with the wind. The soil of these wastes seems to be essentially the same as that which is so fertile under cultivation, and did the population require, it could be rendered equally productive by the labour of a single season. Incomplete as the husbandry is, the value of the zemindary around our cantonments must have increased in a high degree since this was made a station. In what proportion this increased value is shared by the Zemindar and the Nawaub, I have not learnt. No event alters the condition of the Ryut: poverty is invariably his lot however circumstances may change.

MODE OF LIVING AMONG THE MILITARY AND CIVIL
OFFICERS.

.....

Caunpore, Jan. 1798.

THE mode of living in this part of India has, within the last ten or fifteen years, undergone a very great alteration. Before that period the civil and military servants of the company in the first rank were lodged in Bungalows worse than those of a subaltern of the present day: as the practice of feeding beef, mutton, pork, and poultry, was not then introduced, their tables were very poorly supplied; even vegetables were not to be had; though an article indispensably necessary in this climate. Their inconveniences were aggravated by a constant routine of irregularity. After dinner it was the usual custom to go to sleep, in the hottest time of the day; from this every party was awakened in the evening, to partake of a supper, which protracted a drunken reverie till a late hour of the next morning.

AMIDST

AMIDST continued repletion, and frequent irregularity, the climate operated with fatal influence; for trying as Bengal still is to almost every European constitution, there was a time when it was deemed far more hostile. A reformation highly commendable has been effected, partly from necessity; but more by the example of a late governor general, whose elevated rank and noble birth gave him in a great measure the guidance of fashion. Regular hours and sobriety of conduct became as decidedly the test of a man of fashion, as they were formerly of irregularity. Thousands owe their lives, and many more their health, to this change, which had neither been reckoned upon, nor even foreseen by those who introduced it.

ONE species of dissipation often leads to others: the late hours and hard drinking induced gaming, which prevailed to a degree ruinous to many individuals: the same nobleman, above alluded to, by giving this practice his decided disapprobation, and promoting such as refrained from it, has in a great degree lessened the habit, by bringing it into disgrace. Much dissipation, however, still remains: it is the prevailing vice of the military character in every country; and the prevalence of it in India some have regarded as the destruction of our power in the East: they allege "That this has gradually weakened, and at last dissolved the connection of every country with its distant dominions, and that we are not to expect a miracle wrought in our behalf to effect an exemption

emption from the common catastrophe of nations. What Mr. Hume says of despotism, may be with equal justice asserted of the growth of selfish and dissolute manners, it is the *Euthanasia* of our empire in this part of the world."

THEY suggest too, " That other circumstances may intervene to prevent either a natural or an easy dissolution. An independent army, involved in debt by extravagance, or stimulated by avarice, may seize, *brevi manu*, all our possessions for themselves, while the infamy of the treason may sink or disappear, amidst the universal depravity. Where the principle of promotion is length of service, without any other consideration, the most worthless and dissolute may look forward to command with as much confidence as the most meritorious officer. If diligence, bravery, and good conduct be attended with no advantage, they will be soon abandoned and ridiculed as useless qualifications. A person receiving a commission, instead of regarding it as an obligation to discharge the duties of a laborious profession, will consider it a kind of freehold property yielding him a certain annual sum, which nothing but death can deprive him of."

THEY assert, " That among those who are accustomed to command, an independent, haughty, and imperious character becomes unavoidable, unless they are in their turn subjected to the control of a superior. This control, however, is entirely abolished,

the

the moment you allow an officer to regard every step of promotion as a right positively conferred by his own service independent of the will of any superior.”

“ THAT if with all those circumstances, you grant a liberty to each officer who applies for it to remove into any other corps, as often as interest or caprice shall suggest, even the subaltern will be released from every tie of subordination. Does his conduct give offence to his superior officer, he exchanges into another regiment, and bids him defiance. Subordination among officers not only ceases ; but the discipline of the private men is totally neglected. The diligent and faithful officer, by this system, can look for no more than he who is totally unacquainted with the service. That in this climate, without some motive to industry, there will not long remain the appearance of exertion ; Parade duty will soon be neglected, and neither officers nor men will retain sufficient knowledge of their duty, to be of any service, except drawing their monthly allowances.”

“ THAT subalterns rendered independent of their superior officers, begin to treat them as their equals, and despise their authority ; hence by attaching the general officers, you by no means secure the duty or attachment of the army : it becomes in your hands a rope of sand, and only to be guided by its own interest or caprice. That an army, efficient in point of number, may thus become altogether inadequate to the defence or protection of the country : to its employ-

ers

ers only it can prove formidable ; they may be considered, as at its discretion ; or rather they may be regarded as having constructed an unwieldy and tottering edifice, which must crush them by its fall."

" THAT should no dangerous enterprizes be undertaken by an army in this independent and insubordinate state, its discipline will soon so far decline, that hardly any military appearance, save that of the uniform, shall appear. The whole study of officers will be to secure situations of emolument, or such parts of the service as may suit their convenience or pleasure."

" THAT these effects have not been discovered in the Company's army in India, they allege, is highly to the credit of the individuals who compose it. In that mixture which ^{India Gandhi National} composes our military force in this part of the world, you meet with French, Dutch, Portuguese, and wanderers from every nation in Europe : among these, however, there are not a few of respectable families in Britain, who, themselves men of character, hope to return and spend in comfort the little competence acquired in the service. Any enterprize involving the tranquillity of their country, or their own estimation at home, would preclude such hopes, and therefore is avoided. Whatever may be the views of others of a different description, nothing can be undertaken without a general concert and co-operation : hence it has been the fortune of our India possessions to hang by a thread,

thread, which their defenders have not yet agreed, with one heart and one mind, to touch ; though, perhaps, secretly conscious, that with the first breath of commotion it would be for ever broken.”

THESE conclusions may appear plausible, but they proceed on the supposition, that military gentlemen in this service, are equally incapable of discerning their own interest, and of estimating their power. The revenues of India, under a military government, would probably cease to be considerable ; and would certainly fail to be engrossed by one or a few military despots, who had transferred the powers of government to their own persons. Their inferiors would only be treated with regard so long as they were the necessary tools of their ambition : the power of each was no sooner secured, than he would spurn these associates, as the abettors of one treason, or dread them as the projectors of a second. On the most favourable supposition, that of unanimity among the officers on the division of their spoils, a circumstance which perhaps never yet happened, a few only could command. The lot of the far greater part would be that of hirelings to a military usurper, whose government and service had no known rules, either of law, custom or discretion. He pays no high compliment to the discernment of any set of men, who supposes that they would (abstracting from the immorality of the business,) prefer such a situation to the present service, grievous, as in some instances, it may appear.

IT would be doing injustice to so numerous a body to suppose, that these consequences are not foreseen and fully weighed by many of them; on the idea that a change of government *could* be effected by the military force in India: But the possibility of their accomplishing such an object, seems more than doubtful. The European part of the army is a motely mixture of all nations, a small bribe might engage them in any enterprise; but they are the most debauched and unprincipled troops any where to be met with; and would give no sufficient support to any cause, whether good or bad.

THE native troops, in every thing the reverse of the Europeans, would be guarded by their integrity from such measures, unless disguised under the appearance of duty. Such a deception would not be long supported, and as soon as the truth was discovered, they would be more apt to revenge themselves upon their betrayers than to fight their battles.

SUPPOSE, however, all these obstacles overcome, and the country in possession of the troops, how is a succession of European officers and privates to be procured for the support of discipline: In a few years the present race must yield to the severity of the climate, and the discipline of a native corps, would not survive the officers for six months. Then the Indian army would fall back to its original state under native discipline, and could give no more

effectual

effectual opposition to Europeans than when they at first conquered this country.

IN America the cause of revolt was constantly supported and strengthened by a growing spirit of independence in every individual. In India such a spirit never was felt, nor could ever be infused into a hundred persons. The two causes are in direct opposition, and the result would be totally different. I know that some persons, more accustomed to speak than to think, have fancied they saw in India another America; but in the two countries every thing is contrasted: manners, education, habit and religion. And the man who imagines that a change in favour of freedom could be effected in the one as easily as the other, must be ignorant of both.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

WITH a powerful fleet, it will long be in the power of Britain to transport a considerable force to India; while without a continual supply of European officers no discipline can be supported in native troops to oppose that force. A day of retribution very soon would unavoidably come, when the spirit of the nation would be avenged on its perfidious servants:—

*Manet alte reposum
Spreti injuria regni.*

IDEA OF THE MOGUL EMPIRE IN THE REIGN OF ACBER.

Caunpore, Jan. 1798.

THE reign of Acber is an important æra in the annals of Hindostan: it continued half a century, and may be regarded as the Augustan Age of the Mahomedan Emperors. Fortunately for the information of posterity, his intelligent minister Abul Fazel, has left a tolerably correct and detailed account of his government, and the state of the country at this period: large allowance however must be made for the pompous descriptions of the grandeur of the monarch, and the fulsome adulation paid to his wisdom, which are conspicuous throughout this work, which he has entitled the Ayeen Acbery, or Mirror of Acber.

AT the death of this monarch in 1605, his dominions extended from the Thibet mountains on the north,

north, to the province of Viziapoore and Golconda on the south ; and from the borders of Aracan, Assam, and Bootan on the east, to the river Altock, and Cubulistan on the west. It consisted, according to the account of Abul Fazel, of one hundred and five provinces, and two thousand seven hundred districts : a vast territory comprehending the finest and richest countries in the peninsula. For the more convenient administration of the government of this vast empire, Acber divided his dominions into fifteen Subahs, over each of which he appointed a Subadar or viceroy, with various subordinate officers. The names of these Subahs were Delhi, Agra, Allahabad, Oude, Agimer, Ahmedabad, Bahar, Bengal, Cabul, Lahore, Multan, Muterah, Berar, Candeish, and Ahmedgnagur. According to the accurate detail of this subject, given in the Asiatic Register, the empire thus divided was governed nearly on the same principles as the ancient Hindu states. The Emperor, however, ruled with a more absolute sway than the ancient Rajahs, who were cramped by the interference of an arbitrary system of religion, interwoven with the civil code ; and by a domineering hierarchy, which in that code is placed above the prince in the order of society, and which operated with a commanding influence upon both the opinions and the actions of the sovereign.

BOTH as a warrior and a statesman, Acber possessed singular merit. As he enlarged his dominions beyond the limits transmitted to him by his ancestors, it

it was also his glory to govern them by a stricter regard to justice than the precedents which they had left him. What peculiarly distinguished him above every Mahomedan prince is the liberality of his religious sentiments, and the unlimited toleration which he allowed to every class of his subjects. Both the prince and his minister display an enlargement of mind on this subject far beyond what we should expect from the adherents of the Mahomedan faith; and a liberality in his treatment of Schismatics, which at the same period no European monarch seems to have possessed.

“ IN the dominions which he conquered, as well as those which he held by hereditary right, he not only restored the Hindoos to the free exercise of their religion, but also to many of their civil rights *.

“ IN the ancient Hindu state, it would appear from every document, that the prince was the absolute and sole proprietor of the soil; that the land throughout his dominions was apportioned in small allotments to the husbandmen, by whom it was cultivated upon the tenure of a perpetual hereditary lease; that the gross produce of the soil constituted the revenue of the state, and that one sixth part only of that produce, with some variations, had from custom immemorial been demanded by the prince.”

Of

* Vide Asiatic Reg. vol. 3d. p. 2.

Of this gross produce, part was paid in kind, and part in money. The state of landed property in Hindostan continued nearly the same for the first three centuries after the Mahomedan conquests.

THE rude and ferocious fanatics of the Ghiznian race, rather over-ran, than subdued the western provinces. With the short-fighted avarice of barbarians, they preferred the immediate plunder of moveable property, to the more permanent advantage to be derived from a well protected husbandry. They were succeeded by the Afghan dynasty, characterized in general by the same qualities; and though their power was better established, and more permanent, they established no defined mode of payment, or settled system of contribution. If the Ryut was not driven into the woods by actual violence, he pined under the most rigorous exactions, which seemed to have no limits but his ability to pay. During the earlier reigns of the Mahomedan princes, very scanty details are afforded by their historians of the ordinary measures of internal administration. When the horror of the scene becomes deepened by the devastations of some new conqueror, they are more circumstantial than in the common routine of vulgar oppressions; and it may upon the whole be asserted of the best of these princes, that whilst the treasury was kept tolerably full, they were little anxious about the sources from which it was supplied.

ON the accession of Acber, a system of moderation was immediately adopted ; all arbitrary impositions under the name of Jehaat, and Sayer Jehaat, were abolished ; though these, we are informed by his historian, had in some reigns equalled the whole quit-rent of the empire. All merchandize, with a few exceptions, were permitted to pass free of duty ; and the practice of forcibly recruiting the army from the Hindoo labourers was discontinued. These regulations, which were of themselves sufficient to alter the whole constitution of government, were followed up by a variety of others in the same spirit, which have distinguished the reign of this monarch with a high, but just reputation.

IN the complicated business of the assessment of revenue, this prince availed himself of the talents of Rajah Tudor Mull, a Hindoo, distinguished throughout Hindostan for his financial abilities. Abul Fazel, a statesman no less eminent in political sagacity, was raised to the management of the civil government ; and the various reforms which he effected in every branch of affairs, give at once an high idea of his talents, and of the prudent choice of the monarch. The institutions of Acber established in every province of the empire a systematic order and regularity, not only in executing the affairs of government, but in the administration of justice.

THE Subadar, or viceroy, was the immediate representative of the Emperor ; and along with the

Sunnud, or order for his appointment, he received a written code of instructions, the injunctions of which, such as that forbidding to swear, or use foul language, though apparently minute and ridiculous, must have had nevertheless much influence in stimulating his industry, and preserving his fidelity in the discharge of his duty: the welfare of the people is held out as the great end of all his endeavours, and the only foundation of the happiness of the state. Under the viceroy, the Foujdar possesses jurisdiction over several districts: he is considered as an executive officer, who carries into effect the orders of the Subah. His duty is to protect the husbandmen, and punish rebellious or refractory zemindars.

THE judges of Mahomedan courts were the Cazy and the Meer Adul: the first tried causes, and the other passed sentence. All causes whether civil or criminal were submitted to their cognizance, when the parties were Mahomedans; but in litigations between Hindoos only, the decision was left to two Pundits, who tried and determined each case according to the ordinances of the Hindoo code.

EACH province, city, and even each quarter of the same city, was put under the inspection of a police officer, named a Cutwal. This officer was appointed by the Emperor, and was responsible to deliver

up

* Ayeen Achery, vol. p. 368.

up to justice every person who should be guilty of an illegal act within his jurisdiction. When any theft was committed, the police officer was answerable for the value of the stolen goods, if he did not succeed in apprehending the delinquent. The inhabitants themselves seem also to have been liable, when any robbery was committed, if they did not discover to the Cutwal, or secure the offender. By these regulations the police was so vigorously enforced that travellers might pass through the country in perfect safety by night as well as by day. We have the testimony of both Bernier and Tavernier with regard to the security of persons and property, that arose from the peculiar vigilance of the police during succeeding reigns, when these regulations still subsisted : the former of these gentlemen has performed in various parts of India more extensive journeys than any individual.

THE inhabitants of every house, in each town, were registered by the police-man ; the streets, lanes, and public roads were superintended by his officers. During night, the peace was preserved by armed patrols, some of infantry, and others of cavalry. To secure the diligence of the Cutwal, and to prevent his collusion with disorderly persons, his whole conduct was watched by two spies altogether unknown to him, who wrote to court every month a particular account of every occurrence.

By this vast establishment of police officers, tranquillity was not only secured, but a sort of moral discipline was established, which seemed not unfavourable to the virtuous habits of the people; though it must have been altogether incompatible either with personal or civil freedom. Under the protection which it afforded the people; and from the security of property which it effected, the industry of the Hindoos was stimulated to some degree of activity; and agriculture, manufactures, and internal commerce arose to a degree of prosperity equal, perhaps, to what they enjoyed under the ancient princes of their own race.

THE contributions to the state being raised with mildness and equity, were borne with great ease and cheerfulness by the peasant, though they rose to an amount that far exceeded whatever had been raised in any former period. Towards the end of Acber's reign, when the salutary effects of his regulations had time to operate, the taxes amounted annually to thirty-six millions sterling. In a country, and at a period when money was perhaps ten times the value it bears in Britain, this constituted no doubt a large sum; especially since drawn almost wholly from the immediate produce of land. The few taxes paid by manufactures and merchandize, were of little consideration in the amount. Vast as this sum may appear, it did not amount to one fourth of the produce of the lands, according to the assessment made out by Tuder Mull: and though it does not seem to have

comprehended the provision for the poor, the bounties to learned men, nor the pensions given to decayed families, yet we are at a loss to conceive how it supported that immense establishment civil and military, which was upheld by the Mogul Princes. The Zemindary troops, a sort of militia which was maintained exclusively in each province for the purpose of collecting the revenues, and enforcing the police, amounted, we are assured, to no fewer than four millions of men, infantry and cavalry. If to this number we add the regular army, which consisted of eight hundred thousand men, we shall find a very small allowance to each soldier; even though we put out of the estimate all the expences of the court, and the superior officers in all the departments of the state. Either the Sebundy troops must have served with little or no pay, for a certain part of the year only; or the author of the Ayeen Acbery must have committed some palpable mistake. The lands allotted for pensions to meritorious officers, and provision for the poor, are termed Jagheer, and Seyurghal, and are not enumerated in the ordinary revenues of the crown. The last were immense in value, and committed to the disposal of the Suddar, or high almoner; an office highly important, but of a nature so discretionary, that the faithful discharge of it was frequently found to be a task beyond the reach of human virtue. Abul Fazel, the author of Ayeen Acbery, after the disgrace of several great personages, had the superintendance of this department committed to him by the Emperor, whose confidence he seems

seems to have shared as completely as the great Sully did that of his master.

THE collection of the revenues was conducted by a numerous body of officers, whose fidelity was attempted to be secured by various checks and controls: the principle of these checks seems to have been a mixture of Mussulman and Hindoo officers; of the first class was the Aumil, an officer appointed annually by the Subahdar; under him, of the same religious faith, was the Tepukehy, the Zemindar Conengoe, and Karkun, were Hindoos in corresponding situations, as a control upon the first; but the most complete contrivance for this purpose, was the appointment of two Wakyatnavees, or news writers, who seem to have been unknown, or at least totally independent of all the rest, and who transmitted daily to the presence, by post, an account of every occurrence.

IN the appointment of the Hindoo officers of revenue, and particularly of the Zemindar, there was a peculiarity which has occasioned much discussion in the English system of finance. This office, according to the Hindoo law, had been hereditary; and in the Sunnud, or written appointment from the king, the office of collector is conferred as an inheritance, on the special condition of executing the trust with fidelity. Along with their appointment, these officers received a certain portion of land termed Nanker, as a part of their official allowance,

and

and of which they were invested in the absolute proprietary right, by the same tenure, that they held their office. These portions of land allotted to the Zemindar, being intended merely as a provision for his family, were small; and their productive value was deduced from his pay, which was ten per cent. upon the rents which he collected for government.

THE office of Zemindar seems to have been partly executive, and partly judicial; his business on the part of government was specified in the Sunnud of his appointment: it consisted in realising the rent agreed upon for his district; in protecting the Ryut from injustice; and in punishing, by fine or chastisement, such as were criminal or refractory: and though the terms of his appointment conferred hereditary right; yet it was customary for government to dismiss Zemindars from their situation, and to deprive them of their Nankeer lands, on their being convicted of fraudulent and corrupt practices, or even of culpable negligence in the discharge of their duty. Their situation, therefore, bears little resemblance, but in name, to the landholder in more free countries, where the sovereign does not act as the master of his subjects, or as proprietor of the soil.

ALL the orders of government, regarding the Ryuts, were delivered to them by the Zemindar; before him likewise all their grievances and complaints were preferred: he was the ostensible agent of the sovereign, in whatever related to the revenues of the state,

state, and to the rural economy of the country. But the prudent Acber deemed it unsafe to confide entirely to Hindoos in matters of such extensive importance ; he appointed, therefore, a Mahomedan Aumil and a Putchy to each district of the country to assist in the collection of the revenues, and to be a check on the conduct of the Zemindars.

THE institutes of Menu, translated by Sir William Jones, and the digest of Hindoo law translated by Mr Colebrook, have at last settled beyond controversy the long agitated question regarding the property of the soil. It appears now indisputable, that the proprietary right of the soil was vested in the King, both by the Hindoo and Mussulman system of government ; that the actual cultivators of the land, held their small farms immediately from the King, by perpetual hereditary leases, on the specific condition of paying, at stated times, a certain proportion of the annual produce of their lands ; and that between the prince and the husbandman there was no intermediate proprietors whatever, and that the Zemindars, who have been supposed proprietors, were only hereditary servants of the prince, appointed for specific purposes.

SUCH is the brief statement of the civil institutions of Acber ; this military establishment was equally extensive. Besides those irregular troops, commanded by the Aumil, the Cutwall and Zemindar in each district, and which were upwards of four millions,

the

the regular army, which consisted of Mussulmans, amounted to above eight hundred thousand men. The former served only in their particular districts, for the purposes of police or revenue, the latter served to oppose the enemies of the state, on whatever quarter they might invade it.

THE imperial army was divided into 440 munsub or battalions, of unequal numbers, but each proportioned to the rank of the commander, called a munsubdar. Each of these munsub consists of two-thirds cavalry, and one-third infantry; and the three larger were commanded by the Emperor's sons. The first contained ten, the second eight, and the third seven thousand cavalry, having each a third of that number of infantry attached to it. The cavalry were armed with long cutlasses; the infantry with bows and arrows; one third only having muskets, or more properly matchlocks, which they denominate bunclocks.

A PROPORTIONATE number of artillery was attached to each munsub, together with a requisite allowance of elephants, horses, camels, and carts for their baggage. The royal palace, and person of the Emperor, were guarded by a chosen body of men, in addition to the regular army: to which also were added, as occasion might require, 100,000 gladiators (shemsheerbaz), consisting often different corps, armed differently with shields and cudgels, or with daggers and poignards. The whole of this army was formed into

Into 12 grand divisions, which did duty month after month alternately during the time of peace; and officers of every rank were obliged to attend to their stated routine of duty.

IRREGULARITY in furnishing their pay has ever proved the grand defect in all Asiatic armies. The discontents and open mutinies arising from this cause, have often rendered the military more dangerous to their employers than to their enemies. Here the discernment of Acber shone conspicuous: for on the first day of every month the proper officers were furnished with the means, and directed to issue their pay to the troops—This varied not only among the officers, but the private soldiers, according to the corps in which they served. The allowance of a munsubdar, varied from 60,000 to one thousand rupees per month, according to the number of their corps: that of the foot soldier from ten to thirty rupees; while the allowance of a trooper rose from twelve to ninety. The omrahs, who commanded the grand divisions of the army, and whose duty corresponded with that of general officers in European armies, had very frequently assignments of certain portions of land allowed them for pay. These were held during life or perpetuity, on condition of performing military service, and supporting a certain number of troops, ready for actual service or any emergency. The captains had similar consignments made over to them; but, in all cases, it was provided, that the holders of these Jaghiers, should make no alteration in the leases

ses of the Ryuts, by requiring greater exactions than had been paid to government.

" SUCH was the manner in which a great army was constructed and paid," says a judicious writer, " by one of the ablest and most accomplished princes that ever adorned the annals of Asia. Yet the very formation of this vast multitude of armed men, is at variance with every principle of military science, order, and discipline; and is of itself sufficient to show, that Acber, with all his talents, very little surpassed the rest of his countrymen, in his ideas of military affairs.—Twice the number of cavalry to that of infantry; so great disproportion in the number of men of which the different corps was composed; such a wide difference between the pay of officers of the same rank, are defects of such magnitude in the organization of an army, as must necessarily have prevented its ever attaining any degree of systematic discipline, or performing the common evolutions with precision and effect. Yet such was the general ignorance of Asiatics in military science, that this cumbrous army, which, opposed to a body of 30,000 Europeans, must have been defeated by its own radical defects, nevertheless kept all the surrounding nations in complete awe."

UNWARLIKE as the surrounding nations were, the inefficiency of the imperial troops, was often strikingly exemplified in their contests with the subordinate powers of the peninsula. The four Muffulman
princes

princes in the Deccan, namely that Golconda, Biji-poor, Colberga, and Telingah were not subdued during the whole of this reign : the two first remained independent when Tavernier visited India in the time of Jehanguire : and though the imperial policy was continually bent upon their subjugation, there was no period, even in their most prosperous reigns, in which the imperial arms obtained the complete dominion of the peninsula. The numerous armies, and the immense treasures of the state, though guided by the superior wisdom of Acber, were continually wasted in subduing the rebellions, or in combating the independent members of this community of nations. A number of small Hindoo states still retained their independence ; and although they had but little direct influence on the politics of Hindostan, yet, by combining with the Muffulman princes of the Deccan, they prevented the preponderating power of Delhi from gaining a complete ascendant over them. When the Mahratta tribes, originally a pastoral people on the mountains of Berar, afterwards coalesced into a nation ; they made continual predatory eruptions into the adjacent provinces of the empire ; and though frequently driven back, they were never wholly subdued. In a word, the whole military establishments of the Mogul empire, though increased to the incredible amount of near five millions of men, were not so efficient either in maintaining internal peace or prosecuting war, as the more energetic system adopted by the British East India Company, though

it does not withdraw from the industry of the country one-fortieth part of the number of hands.

THE expenditure of thirty-six millions, in the pay of officers and troops of every description, as no part of this vast sum was carried out of the country, implies a powerful demand for manufactures, and a strong stimulus to industry: yet the export trade of Hindostan was, probably, not equal to what it is at present. The loss of inhabitants, and the destruction of property, occasioned by the distractions, and final dissolution of the Mogul government, must have materially injured the prosperity of the country. The British provinces of Bengal, and Bahar, suffered for many years largely by these distractions, yet their revenues, even in their diminished state, will not be disgraced by a comparison of their present products, with that which they yielded under the celebrated administration of Acber.

THE Subah of Bahar, according to the Ayeen Acbery, was rated annually in the books of the Exchequer at five millions five hundred and forty-seven thousand rupees, at a reasonable exchange, equal to 554,700l. It contributed at the same time above half a million of troops—In the same volume Bengal stands assessed at 14,961,482 rupees, or one million and a half Sterling, while it contributed 824,000 soldiers,

* Ayeen Acbery, vol. 2d. p. 19.

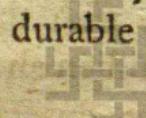
diers, and upwards of 4000 cannons, and as many boats.

ON looking into the India budget for 1797, we find the revenue of the Bengal provinces, which correspond with these subahs in the Ayeen Acbery, stated at above six ~~hundred~~ millions Sterling.— Here is a revenue of nearly three times the amount of that obtained by the immortal Acber, from provinces that had been ravaged by Mahrattas for twenty years before they fell into our possession, and in a manner which the old inhabitants still describe with horror. Nor can the present impost be regarded as more, or even equally as oppressive with the other, since the enormous requisition of a million and a half of troops, boats, and artillery is not exacted from the inhabitants.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

FROM this simple statement of facts, it will appear with what justice some declaimers hold up the grandeur, power, and prosperity of the Mogul government, compared to the present state of the British provinces in India. The complaisance may be pardoned in Abul Fazel, writing under the eye of a despotic prince, whom he dreaded, and whom he probably brought himself to believe to be endowed with preternatural powers, since he confidently asserts, that he was gifted with inspiration; but from what bias modern writers are led to ascribe every advantage to past, and every evil to the present system, and the present times it is not so easy to conjecture, as it is to prove

prove, that their representations are altogether unfounded in truth. The vast, unwieldy, and expensive machinery of the Mogul government is proved by the concurring testimony of history to have been very inefficient in promoting either the peace or prosperity of the people: bad, however, as it was, had the European system immediately succeeded it, the advantage to the country must have been immense. Established as the latter has been, upon the scattered fragments of society, and the mere wreck of empire, it appears astonishing to contemplate so speedy a renovation as that which it has effected; and to behold a new fabric of human *association* rising from the ruins of the old, of a more seemly and convenient structure, as well as of more durable materials.



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

GENERAL SKETCH OF THE MAHRATTA GOVERNMENT.

.....

Chunar, 1798.

BEFORE I left Europe, I freely own that I entertained the same erroneous notion regarding the influence of the British government on the peace and security of the natives of Asia, which were then prevalent in England. The idea of foreigners making such vast and rapid conquests in a distant country, was in my mind closely allied with much misery, rapine and oppression, exercised against the unwarlike and passive Hindoos. The forcible possession of a country which by immemorial prescription, the best of all rights, was their own ; with me I confess militated against the very first principles of justice. It was only by the irresistible evidence of a thousand facts, and daily observation that I have been forced to abandon those opinions which were cherished not merely as virtuous, but a part of myself. I am fully convinced

vinced that the conquest of Asia by Europeans, has not been a severe dispensation, but a grand and useful remedy for the innumerable evils which they suffered.

UPON your mind I have little hope of producing the same conviction : The Barbary states however, Egypt and the whole Turkish empire, have long remained in such a state of barbarous anarchy, that even an Englishman could believe they might be benefited by a conquest. After what I have witnessed, I have no difficulty in admitting that the government of the most unprincipled nation in Europe, would produce a desirable amelioration of its condition.

THE Mogul government at no period offered full security to the prince, still less to his vassals ; and to peasants the most scanty protection of all. It was a continued tissue of violence and insurrection, treachery and punishment, under which neither commerce nor the arts could prosper, nor agriculture assume the appearance of a system : Its downfall gave rise to a state still more afflictive, since anarchy is worse than misrule. The Mahomedan government, wretched as it was, the European nations have not the merit of overturning. It fell beneath the weight of its own corruption, and had already been succeeded by the multifarious tyranny of petty chiefs, whose right to govern consisted in their treason to the state, and whose exactions on the peasants were as boundless as their avarice. The rents to government were, and where natives rule, still are levied twice a year, by a merciless

merciless banditti, under the semblance of an army, who wantonly destroy or carry off whatever part of the produce may satisfy their caprice, or satiate their avidity, after having hunted the ill fated peasants from the villages to the woods. Any attempt of the peasants to defend their persons or property within the mud walls of their villages, only calls for the more signal vengeance on those useful, but ill fated mortals. They are then surrounded and attacked with musketry and field-pieces till resistance ceases, when the survivors are sold, and their habitations burnt and levelled with the ground. Hence you will frequently meet with the ryuts gathering up the scattered remnants of what had yesterday been their habitation, if fear has permitted them to return ; but oftener the ruins are seen smoking, after a second visitation of this kind ; without the appearance of a human being to interrupt the awful silence of desolation.

THIS description does not apply to the Mahommedan chieftains alone ; it is equally applicable to the Rajahs in the districts governed by Hindoos. These two races of men, however distinct they continue in certain modes and observances, are very much assimilated in barbarity, and in ignorance of the art of government : Their neighbourhood, occasions a perpetual intercourse of war or contention, which strengthens every malevolent principle to a degree, incompatible either with peace or improvement. This is the more to be regretted, as the Hindoos are regaining the sovereignty of their ancient possessions. At present

present the Mahratta people extend their sway in one form or another, from the bay of Bengal, to the river Indus. The degraded Hindoo sovereign is reinstated in the Mysore, so that this antient people have recovered more than one half of India. Throughout the whole of this immense district, agriculture is in a very imperfect state, and in that state it must continue from the oppressions of petty tyrants in their own districts, or the external evils occasioned by the wars of contending chieftains.

THE following observations selected from an account of this people by Willam H. Tone, commander of a regiment in the service of the Peshwah, are entitled to be regarded as the most authentic that have yet been communicated on this subject. From a long residence in the country, and a minute personal observation of their manners, this gentleman has enjoyed very superior advantages in elucidating this subject.

“ I know not under what precise head to arrange the form of the Mahratta government. It is not, strictly speaking, a complete monarchy : they have no titled nobility ; of consequence it does not come under the definition of an aristocracy : the people have no weight ; it is therefore no democracy. It would perhaps be best described, by resembling it to the circles of Germany, as a military republic, composed of chiefs independent of each other ; acknowledging as their supreme head, the Peshwah, who is himself the

the supposed minister of the Sattarah Rajah. Their submission, however, is in many particulars merely nominal. The unfortunate descendant of Sevajee, though less than a cypher, has some occasional attentions paid to him. No Peshwa can be appointed without receiving the kelat of investiture from his hands. Whenever the Peshwa takes the field in person, he must previously receive an audience of leave from the Rajah. The country circumjacent to Sattarah, enjoys an exemption from military depredations of all kinds ; and whenever any chief enters this district, all ensigns of royalty are laid aside ; and the *nagara*, or great drum of the empire ceases to beat. These, I believe, are the only marks of attention paid to the nominal head of this powerful government; in other particulars, he is a close prisoner on a very moderate allowance. The present Rajah was some few years back, a private filladar, or commandant of horse ; but being unfortunately of the blood of Sevajee, on the demise of his predecessor, he was exalted from a state of happy obscurity, to the splendid misery of a throne and a prison.

Every thing respecting this extraordinary people, becomes an object of curiosity, as they appear a kind of phenomenon in the world of oriental politics. Their principles of government excite our attention, as they discover a mode of thinking and acting, totally differing from the regular system of European policy. The very local arrangements of empire are peculiar ; the territory of the different chiefs being

blended or interspersed with each other. Part of the Peshwa's dominions lie on the sea coast, and part on the northward of Delhi. It is also no uncommon thing for a pergunnah, sometimes a single town, to belong to two or three different chiefs: some are even the joint property of the Peshwa and the Nizam. A disposition so chequered, strikes me as having a tendency to weaken the combined strength of the whole; but whether this be the effect of policy or accident, I confess I cannot determine.

THE Peshwa, though the acknowledged head of the empire, has but very little territory in his own hands: the Soubadarry of Amedabad, worth about sixty lacks a year, is the largest district he possesses. Some of the great personages of the Poonah Sircar hold jagheers from the state by right of office, which being independent of the Peshwa, are very valuable. That lately held by Purseram Bow, was worth thirty lacks annually. Rustia Foncia, or as he is termed the Tope Koonah Walla, an officer corresponding to our master-general of ordinance, Firkia and many others, have very considerable revenues; but the mere landed income in the hands of the Peshwa, is very trifling: His resources depend upon the contributions of the other members of the empire, which every thing included, do not exceed four crore of rupees a year.

IN the great durbar of Poonah, all the higher offices are hereditary. The *Dewan**, *Furnaveſe*,

Chitnaveſe

* Minister.

† Chancellor.

Chitnavesef ‡, and even the commander in chief or holder of the jerry put § are all situations held by descent; and so much is this rule adhered to, that no peshwa has ever presumed to invade it. The custom, however, does not obtain in the inferior durbars.

IT is one peculiar feature of the Mahratta government, that the empire always considers itself as in a state of war. This circumstance entirely results from the unsettled and fluctuating state of the internal government: their recent acquisitions in Hindostan are held only by the sword; and they are under the necessity of compelling the payment of the Chout, always given with reluctance, or extorted by actual force. But, independent of these motives, war is with them a source of revenue; as the different chiefs of the empire make annual campaigns in the few districts which have not yet been brought to a state of subjection, or actual servitude. These military excursions are termed *Muluk-gheré*, two Persian words, which signify taking possession of territory.

THIS eternal warfare is the cause of an enormous expence; to supply which the Mahrattas have many modes of finance; but the most prevailing one is that of anticipating their revenues. It is unnecessary to enlarge on the defects of a system so obviously

‡ Master of requests. § A small standard made of gold cloth.

viously pernicious. These mortgages upon the territorial revenue are negotiated by wealthy Soucars, between whom and the minister there always exists a proper understanding ; they are frequently at a discount of thirty or forty per cent. and then paid in the most depreciated currency. This ruinous method of raising the supplies, arises from the unsettled state of the country, which induces government to prefer a certain sum in hand, though at an enormous usury, to the possible receipt of a precarious revenue at the expiration of three or four years, to which extent they are frequently anticipated. In such districts as remain in the management of the Sircar, the taxes are raised according to the usages of the highest antiquity, and are generally very moderate. The duties on common commodities, on a gross estimate, never exceed five per cent. except on Ghee, which amounts to fifty. The revenue resulting from the proprietary right to the soil, which is one half of the produce ; the Chout paid by the Nizam, and the plunder raised by Moulukgheré, form the grand pecuniary resources of the Mahratta empire. These, though amounting to a vast sum, are far short of the current expences. The conquered country in Hindostan, exhausted by continual depredations, is no longer capable to furnish a single rupee. The entire wealth of this once rich country, is buried in the private treasuries of the Mahratta chiefs, and lost to all the purposes of circulation. So great is the scarcity of specie in the upper provinces, that for these two years past, Scindia has been obliged to extort

tort money from the Poonah government for the payment of his vast armies in Hindostan.

IN the different governments of the native powers, as in the most despotic ones, the prince unless he possesses great talents, is merely a cypher; the Dewan, or minister, has all authority in his hands. This office is universally bestowed on the person who gives the greatest nuzzur, or more properly speaking, can furnish a sum to answer some particular exigence of the state: for an inability to supply money for current expences, is always sure to displace a minister. The prince having taken the bribe, often amounting to many lacks of rupees, the object of the purchaser is to reimburse himself. Here the great door to corruption is thrown open: every office is set up to auction, and knocked down to the highest bidder, without regarding any qualification but the price. Every situation, Komisdars, Killadars, and places, are disposed of in public market. No check can be given to consequential peculation. He that should punish the delinquent, has himself set the example, and is equally implicated in his guilt. The very man that has bought his office is not certain of holding it a year; this consideration gives additional keenness to his avarice, till it gets whetted to the highest degree, and he extorts from the unfortunate Ryut the product of his labour, without compunction. Thus he plunders without mercy the very subject it is his duty to protect. If this tyrant be removed, the evil is by no means removed with him; for

for his successor, if he buys his office, (and on no other terms will he get it), will most certainly be equally rapacious and unprincipled.

IT is from causes of this kind, that the bulk of the people are almost without property. Few under a Mahratta government have any opportunity of acquiring wealth, except the powerful Brahmins, who hold offices in the Durbar. Their avarice is insatiable; and if ever the madness of accumulation was marked with the highest degree of folly, it is in the present instance: for although the Brahmin may be permitted to go on even for years in every practice of extortion, his wealth at last excites the attention of the prince, when he is obliged to disgorge, and is perhaps ordered to a Kella for life. If he happens to die while in office, his property is generally sequestrated by the Sircar. In this case his family is provided for either by a pension, or otherwise; and the custom of plunder, which is called **Goonogeré** *, forms one very considerable part of the contingent revenue.

UPON the whole, I believe, there is not upon record an example of any government so little calculated to give protection to the subject, as the fluctuating and unsteady system of the Mahrattas: an administration formed of rapacity, corruption, and insta-

* Compound epithet, signifying *crime penalty*.

instability, affords but little hope of domestic happiness, or public security. To this grand source may be ascribed the accumulated misery of the people; oppression, poverty, and famine, which last appears the appropriated curse of this country. When we reflect on the great fertility of Hindostan in general, it is amazing to consider the frequency of this dreadful visitation. It is evidently not owing to any sterility in the soil or climate, since there are many seasons that yield two or three crops; the evil must be traced to some political cause; and it requires but little penetration to discover it in the avarice and extortion of the various governments. In a country such as this, where revolutions are so common, the great spur to industry, that of security, is taken away: the Ryut, who cultivates his ground this year, is by no means sure of possessing it the next: if he should, it is highly probable that under a government that holds its sway only by the sword, some large detachment may be quartered in his neighbourhood: no greater blow can be given to industry; for a Mahratta army is more indefatigably destructive than myriads of locusts. The property of friends and enemies falls equally a prey to their undistinguishing depredations. Hence no man raises more grain than is barely sufficient for himself; and the produce of the year is just equivalent to its consumption. The consequence is, as there are no public granaries, that the first unfavourable season produces a famine: the inhabitants abandon their fields, and either fly to the coast, or to some other place, where

where the famine has prevailed less. This new accession of people produces a famine there also, and the evil becomes universal.

It is at this period, that the traveller beholds the greatest of all human miseries ; hunger, nakedness, and disease, and death, which in this case is the extreme of mercy. He sees the streets strewed with carcases ; the highways with skeletons ; and every countenance proclaiming misery, wretchedness, and despair. It is owing to the frequency of this dreadful calamity, that the Mahrattas are total strangers to charity, and possess an insensibility of heart, to which other nations are strangers. The feelings become steeled with a repetition of distress, especially in a people whose ruling passion is avarice. A Mahratta will see his own brother expire before him with the most phlegmatic composure. Perhaps the man who has beheld his whole family die around him, without exciting one sentiment of compassion in his fellow-beings, will, when the evil again recurs, find his heart hardened against mankind from a recollection of their barbarity, rather than softened to pity by a knowledge of their distress. Such is the effect of famine upon morals ; but I believe it has never produced one insurrection against the government, which, for the most part, occasions it. The Hindoo has but few passions ; he considers misfortune as his fate ; and he submits without a struggle.

IT is also owing to famine, and its concomitant depopulations, that some parts of India are so thinly inhabited. I believe it may be safely asserted, that through the whole country (Bengal and Behar excepted) one acre in fifty is not cultivated ; and the quantity of tilled land will always bear a proportion to the number of people to be maintained by it. It is no uncommon circumstance for large cities, in the time of famine, to lose three fourths of their inhabitants ; and the country suffers in the same degree. Frequently whole districts are swept away, and for years remain a jungle, notwithstanding the climate is so favourable to population. Upon the whole, between the indolence of the people, and the rapacity of the government, famine appears to be the prime curse of this country ; yet, incredible as it may seem, no provisions are ever made against it ; but that the fault is not in nature, or the natives, may be seen by turning to Bengal, which, enjoying a more steady administration, has not suffered famine, I believe, since that which happened in 1770, or 1771, twenty-six years ago ; although every other part of India has been frequently visited by it since that period.

SUCH is the comparative state of the British provinces, and the rest of India, drawn by a disinterested spectator, and I have often had occasion to witness its accuracy and truth. Upon what principle then does the Abbe Reynal, and after him other ignorant declaimers, give out that the English have

robbed the natives of their possessions, and distressed them by their cruelties? The British territories are, in truth, the only part of the country which they peaceably possess; the only asylum where they, at this hour, enjoy in any competent degree either protection, plenty, or comfort. Among a people so long accustomed to anarchy or misrule, it would be too sanguine to expect that habits of industry or submission to order can be speedily established; yet that the extension of European dominion over this vast country, above described, has proved a great blessing, is a truth as incontrovertible as any in the science of morals. It has already been brought to the test of experience; and so far as it has yet extended, the truth has obtained all the evidence of demonstration. When, therefore, you hear of instances of misconduct in our countrymen, and there perhaps have been some, they do not overturn the general principle; for assuredly a system in some respects bad, may be a great improvement on another which has always been essentially and radically worse.

OF THE DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY.

Near Patna, Nov. 1799.

THE security of so vast a territory as the British empire in India, must be regarded as a momentous concern, whether you view the subject in regard to external defence, or internal protection. The most populous nation in Europe could not perhaps supply the continual drain of inhabitants which an army adequate to this purpose must necessarily require. An hundred thousand troops could not prove sufficient; and reckoning the life of a soldier in India at the average of ten years, this would annually withdraw ten thousand of the most useful and enterprising part of the community, after it had already supplied the unavoidable waste of a numerous military establishment at home. Could such a number of hands be afforded for the supply of one branch of the service, it

it would induce a debility at home, or a depopulation which no foreign dominion could compensate. It was perhaps the overstrained exertions of the Portuguese and Spanish nations, co-operating with a more than ordinary corruption of manners, that has lowered the power and consequence of these kingdoms in the scale of Europe, to a degree which no acquisition of wealth can retrieve.

HAPPILY for Great Britain, the defence of this country does not necessarily require such a proportion of its inhabitants. The natives are themselves excellent soldiers while under the discipline and command of European officers: they are not only expert in their exercise, but distinguished by a cool and steady bravery which would do honour to any troops. The revenue of the country will always be adequate to defray the charge of a sufficient number of native troops, if managed with any economy; and the subordination which they have ever shewn, is a full security for their fidelity. The army has on every occasion been submissive to its commanders; the individuals of which it is composed have sacrificed to discipline more of their prejudices, than can be found in any other instance. Brahmins, and persons of the higher castes, are commanded by their inferiors in rank without a murmur upon actual duty. Many instances may perhaps be produced in which they have been deprived of part of their small allowances, by the mean artifices of their superiors; but I believe

believe there is hardly a single example of their making a common cause to revenge their wrong.

ON a late occasion, a corps of native infantry, upon a mistaken interpretation of their inclination, was ordered to be embarked as marines, a service not included in the terms of their covenant with the Company, and directly contrary to the prejudices of the greater part of the Hindoos. They refused to comply : force was employed ; they resisted it as far as they were able ; but were forced to submit. This transaction, while it displays their tenacity to their principles, and the terms of their agreement, shews also their implicit submission, where we have a right to their services. This refractory corps was attacked by another of their own countrymen, and soon reduced to submission, by their steady behaviour under the direction of European officers.

THIS transaction, however much it may reflect upon the equity of our conduct, affords the fullest evidence of the want of a general spirit of resistance to Europeans. If our conduct be guided in any measure by justice or humanity, we can have nothing to apprehend from a general combination of a native army.

THERE is probably still less to dread from a general confederacy of the independent princes of the country against us. Their mutual jealousies and animosities will for ever defeat such a scheme. The advantage

advantage here is all upon our part; for during a late war with Tippoo a more numerous combination was formed by us against that prince, than the monarchs of India could ever bring to co operate for the assertion of their common independence. The armies of India resemble those undisciplined bands which the feudal princes of Europe formerly collected around them. They are composed of the dependents of the great lords of court; are retained by them, and meet or disband at their pleasure, rather than by the orders of the prince. A combination of these chiefs may prove formidable to their own sovereign, but never to a foreign power.

A sepoy army must then prove the chief defence of our possessions; neither its number nor expence can prove a burden to the inhabitants at large: their pay is superior to the wages of common labour, and more punctually paid; numbers are therefore willing to enlist, for a limited number of years, during which the frugal native is often enabled to accumulate what, to him, is an independent fortune.

It is from this circumstance that they so frequently ask leave to retire from the service; a thing more injurious to the service in appearance, than in reality. Their independent and easy circumstances, attracts others to supply their place; while there is little to be apprehended from their engaging in the army of any hostile power. A native soldier, after a few months disuse, becomes as completely ignorant of his

his duty, as if he had never learnt it. The reduction of a body of men to mere mechanical motions, in which the excellence of discipline has been supposed to consist, is the work of nature herself upon the natives of India. Deprive them of the officer, who may be regarded as the acting spring, and they are unable to execute any movement however simple : discontinue their exercise for a short time, and they will resume it with a consciousness of their own incapacity ; every trial is ineffectual till again they are wound up anew by the labour of fresh instruction. The natives are therefore incapable of carrying European discipline into a foreign army ; as often as the country powers have attempted this, they have procured officers from that service to introduce it.

NATIVE troops are also preferable from the small expence of their establishment. A battalion of a thousand men, exclusive of the pay of officers, may be kept up at a smaller charge than some individual servants cost the Company. Our dominion in India, therefore, will probably prove coeval with our economy and public virtue : should profusion so far increase, that a few favourites shall engross and dissipate the means of supporting our power, it must fall like an edifice that has been undermined in its foundation.

FROM the insubordination or revolt of its native armies, Britain has nothing to fear ; from their incapacity

incapacity to repel hostile attacks, it has probably still less. It is to the dissolute and corrupt habits of its servants ; or to the treachery of its European troops, that it must look for the gradual decay, or the sudden overthrow of its power in India.



OF THE SERVANTS OF THE INDIA COMPANY.

Calcutta, Dec. 1799.

THE whole of the Hon. Company's civil and military servants holding appointments, by the most accurate lists published, do not amount on this establishment to more than two thousand. This must certainly appear a small number of persons to engross with their salaries so large a sum as that which constitutes the established charge of this Presidency.

THE far greater part of the servants of the Company however enjoy only moderate appointments; whether you regard the sacrifice made to attain them, or the duty required in their faithful execution. The man who removes so far from his native land, and breaks off every tie whether of affection or of blood, certainly merits some compensation for the positive comforts and advantages which he thus foregoes.

When to this you add the dangers incurred from the climate, which even in its most favourable operation soon debilitates the constitution, and certainly shortens the period of life; it may readily be admitted that the enterprising spirit of the Company's servants is not extravagantly rewarded.

THAT a subaltern in the army, or a junior civil servant, after having incurred the expence of a long voyage, and a genteel education, should receive a competent subsistence, for here it is no more, is certainly what he is entitled to in any part of the world. But from this frugality and decorum in the payment of the Company's servants, there have crept in many wide deviations.

You will in some instances find a single individual and his family in the receipt of an annual salary almost sufficient to defray the ordinary charge of a sepoy battalion. Whether this be profusion, partiality, or a generous retribution of services, all must allow that it encroaches severely upon that revenue, by which the empire in this part of the world must be defended. But withdrawing the means of defence is by no means the only effect of this unequal distribution of the revenue; it tends in various ways to increase its danger.

SPLENDID fortunes suddenly accumulated, hold up a dazzling but false picture of the riches of our India possessions. The attention not only of the country

country powers, but of every nation in Europe, is turned towards them with a jealous avidity. If any circumstance more powerfully than another can provoke invasion, it is this pernicious display of imaginary, because individual wealth.

EXCESSIVE affluence in the hands of a few is immediately destructive to every branch of the service. Irregular living, gaming, and profusion, are the immediate consequences to all in the vicinity of one dissipated civil servant of the Company. Young officers and writers are tempted to partake in all the indulgences of luxury: they engage in play, contract debt on exorbitant interest, and ruin approaches with irresistible rapidity. Hence, while the excessive opulence of individuals holds up a bait to the enemies of the country, it debilitates and renders unserviceable that body of men who are entrusted with its defence.

IT is in this circumstance that a reflecting mind would probably trace the decline of the British power in India. Extravagant fortunes, accumulated in the East, are carried home to be dissipated in all the tasteless profusion of new gotten wealth. Manners become corrupted at home; new adventurers more dissolute than the former arrive, who instead of checking, improve upon the vices of their predecessors. The army becomes dissolute and necessitous; a state in which it has ever proved less formidable to its enemies than its employers.

THE

THE proper guidance, and virtuous administration of a government so expensive as that of India; and the upright distribution of its revenue, proves an effort too great for the energy and virtue of any individual. In such a state of manners, effeminacy, corruption, debts, and treason, have gradually arisen, and have in the course of ages dissolved the connection of every European nation and its Asiatic provinces, whose history has ever yet been recorded.

PERHAPS there is no certain grounds upon which you can claim an exemption to the British empire from the common catastrophe of nations. It is however comfortable to observe, that its government in India has hitherto continued to improve; both in the security and protection yielded to its native subjects, and in the equity of its conduct to the neighbouring powers. In the infancy of our power there was no regular controul over its operations. The ambition of a commander, or the exigencies of the treasury, were sometimes sufficient motives to attack an independent and unoffending neighbour: and what is still more pernicious and disgraceful, the ingenuity of his avarice might discover treason in a province, merely to afford a pretence for its depreciation.

IN proportion as Indian politics have become better known in Britain, remedies have been regularly provided for these evils. His present Majesty, to whose care providence has committed the protection of

of a larger portion of Asiatic subjects, than ever fell under the dominion of any European monarch, enjoys also the peculiar felicity of seeing them better governed. For with all its imperfections the British government in India has operated with a more systematical and constant effect to the security of the natives, than that of any other power that has ever acquired dominion in Asia.

FROM the different checks arising from its constituent parts, we have not now to apprehend violent or unprovoked attacks against its neighbours, nor the depredation of its provinces by unprincipled commanders. There is more imminent danger from a weak, inefficient administration, unable to overawe the disaffected, check the dissipated, or to intimidate the corrupt. The tendency of future times will perhaps lead to a government of expensive jobs and expedients for the provision of relations and favourites. In an age not remarkable for the sternness or inflexibility of its virtue, it will be difficult to find an individual of integrity and firmness to resist the solicitations of favourites; and to do justice to the claims of merit or of service. Farther accumulations of offices and emoluments may yet be heaped upon individuals and their friends; and those seeds of degeneracy already begun to disclose, may ripen into the full maturity of depravity; a state closely bordering upon disgrace and ruin. The revenue, instead of being employed to encrease the investments, or to augment the military force, may be squandered away

way in empty parade, or lavished in the erection of phantastic buildings under the pretext of magnificence; but in reality to gratify the vanity of a weak and unprincipled governor.

In a quarter of the world so remote as India, Great Britain has perhaps more to fear from the disloyalty of its army, than from its dissipation. The distant possessions of the Romans were more frequently lost by the revolt of their legions, than by their inability to defend them against foreign enemies. Britain itself proclaimed one of its commanding officers emperor; and was for a while lost to the state. The legions in Germany frequently mutinied; those entrusted with the defence of the Asiatic provinces were often guilty of the greatest excesses †.

ALL these misfortunes seemed the unavoidable consequences of a dissolute army entrusted to an unprincipled commander. The supreme executive power was never for a moment entrusted to other hands than the senate or the emperors. They had no officers fixed for life in particular provinces, which the executive power had not an acknowledged right to recal, and order upon whatever service the general exigencies of the state might require. When this is the case, the officers gradually lose their attachment to the parent state; all their interests centre in

^{Indira Gandhi National}
† Vid. Tacit. Hist. passim.

the particular district to which they are attached, and these they may consider as directly opposite to that of the empire at large. A body of officers whose attachments to their native country must be weakened in proportion to the time they have left it, and to the distance of their prospect of returning, will unavoidably be influenced by an *esprit du corps* dangerous to the state. The situation of all is similar ; their interests are supposed to be the same ; and it is impossible, while they feel uncontrollable power in their possession, that they should not exert it for their individual interest, rather than for that of their country.

IN such a situation, it is in vain to imagine that you can attach them to their country by conferring rank and emolument. The best paid troops in every country have ever become the most dissolute and unprincipled ; and a privileged corps with superior pay, must in the end prove as dangerous as the pretorian bands of Rome, or the janissaries of Constantinople. If they are constituted without your authority, and are guided by a different power, you in reality acknowledge their independence. Their numbers, and their distance, render controul difficult, or impossible. They will soon feel this, and arrange not only their own service, but the government of their province agreeably to their own ideas, that is, their own pecuniary interest. In the form of humble advice, petition or remonstrance, or in whatever language they may choose to veil their conduct, it will always prove

prove to their country the dictates of an army from whom it must receive the law.

IF our troops therefore in India continue to act with the moderation and disinterestedness of dutiful subjects for a series ages, they will overcome a temptation which has always proved irresistible to the rest of mankind ; and exhibit to the world an example of virtue, of which its history has not yet recorded any well attested example.

THE sudden acquisition of such an extent of dominion as the British have obtained in Asia, has produced a situation, for which its government had not sufficient experience to enable it at once to frame adequate regulations. Farther experiments in maintaining power over distant territories will communicate more knowledge, and suggest other expedients more suitable to this purpose than a local, permanent, and independent army. It is probably owing to their diffidence of each other, or of the unenterprising character of our seapoys, that the empire has not already sustained irreparable loss, or been torn asunder by such a dangerous machine.

INTO these general strictures on the state of India, no allusion either to the praise or censure of any individual at present acting upon the scene, has been admitted. A particular detail of the character and actions of those men who have conducted its affairs, cannot be done with impartiality till some ages after the

the individuals have retired. The person who would venture into the dangerous precincts of our recent biography, would probably soon have equal reason with the poet to exclaim,

*“ Incedo super ignes
“ Suppositos cinere doloso.””*

IN the records of the Portuguese we may perhaps read our own fate; or at least may behold a picture of their manners, which at some future period may prove too exact a resemblance to our own. It is thus delineated by the Abbé Raynal, a writer who, however loose and inaccurate in detailing some particular facts and customs, had ample means of becoming acquainted with the great outlines of the Portuguese conduct in Asia.

“ IN a short time they preserved no more humanity, or good faith with each other, than with the natives. Almost all the states, where they had the command, were divided into factions.

“ THERE prevailed every where in their manners a mixture of avarice, debauchery, cruelty, and devotion. They had most of them seven or eight concubines, whom they kept to work with the utmost rigour, and forced from them the money they gained by their labour. Such treatment of women was very repugnant to the spirit of chivalry.

Ccc

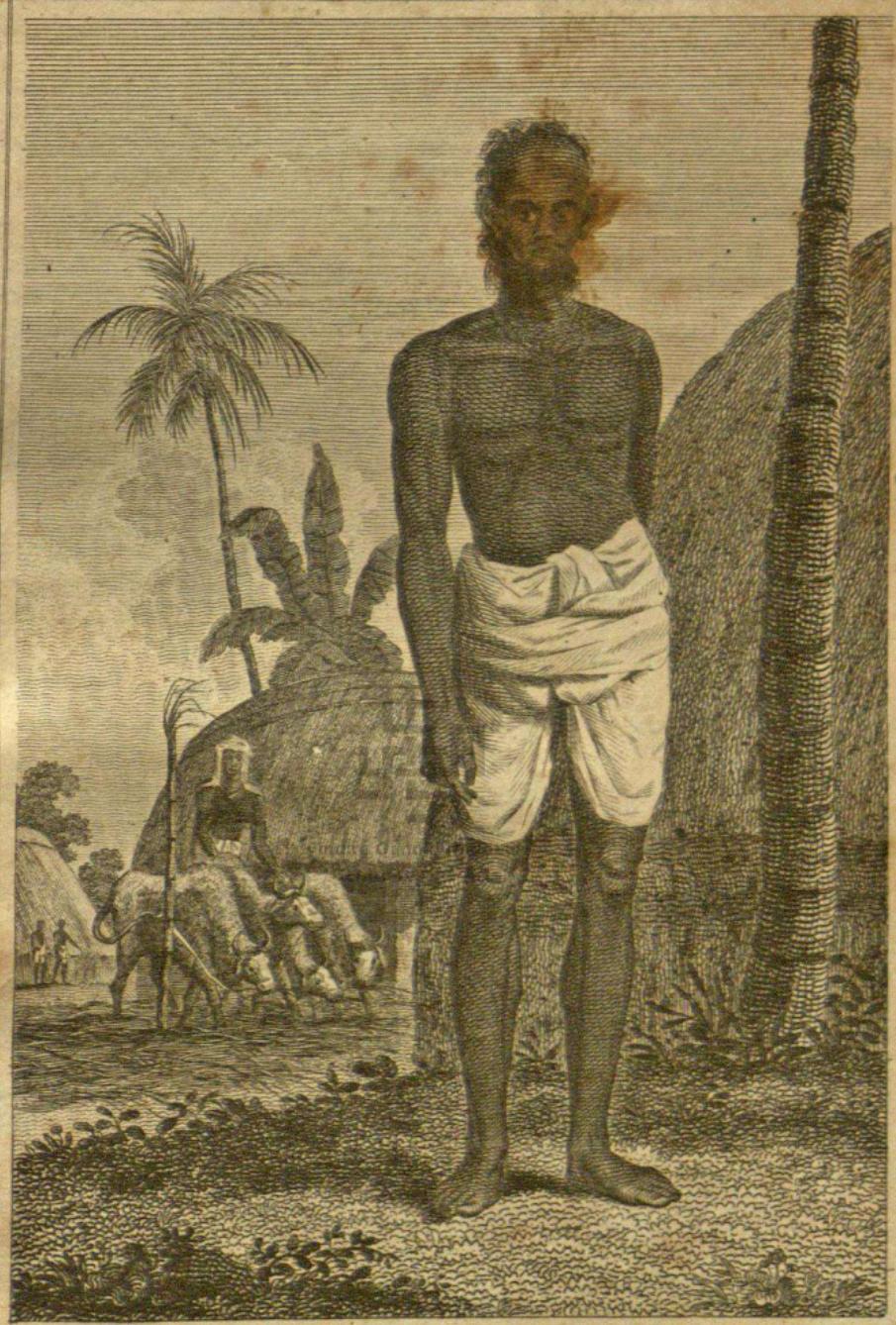
“ THE

"THE chiefs, and principal officers, retained a multitude of those singing and dancing women, with which India abounds. Effeminacy introduced itself into their houses and armies. The officers marched to meet the enemy in palanquins. That brilliant courage which had subdued so many nations, existed no longer among them. The Portuguese were with difficulty brought to fight, except where there was a prospect of plunder. In a short time the King of Portugal no longer received the tribute, which was paid him by three hundred and fifty eastern princes. This money was lost in its way from them to him. Such corruptions prevailed in the finances, that the tribute of sovereigns, the revenue of the provinces, which ought to have been immense, the taxes levied in gold and silver, and spices, on the inhabitants of the continent and islands, were not sufficient to keep up a few citadels, and to fit out the shipping that was necessary for the protection of trade."

Centre for the Arts
END OF VOLUME FIRST.

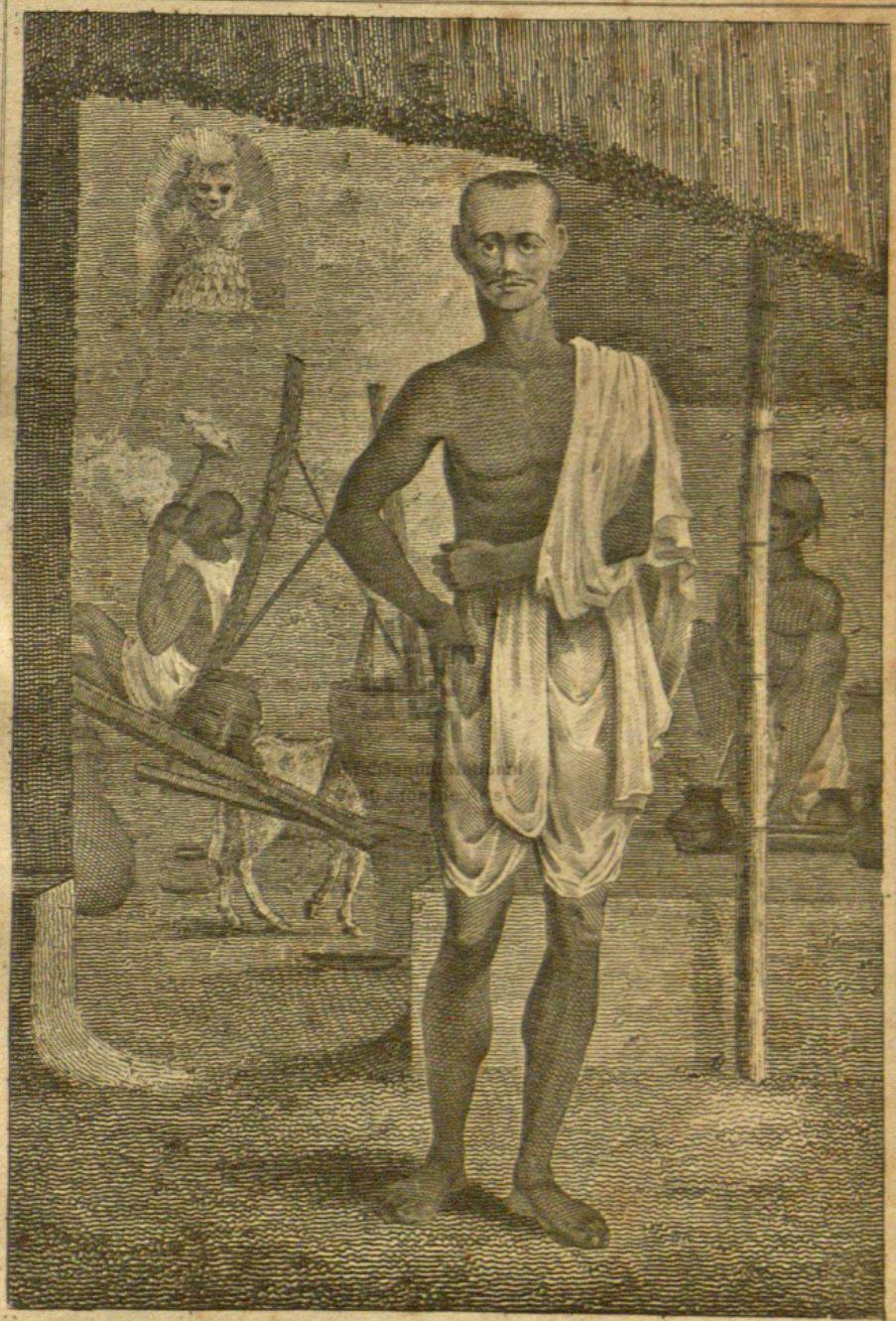
PRINTED BY C. STEWART,
EDINBURGH.





Engd by R Scott

THE THRASHING FLOOR OF A RYUT.



Engraved by R. Scott

THE OIL MILL OF THE HINDOOS.

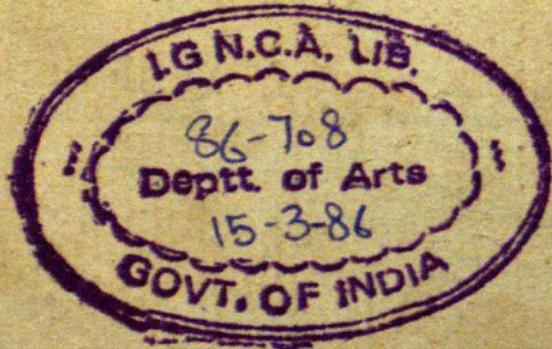


A PENITENT at BENARIS.

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts



(See also pp. V)

6. Small knot of Senses

35. Sicks

36. "

42. Honest nature connects

51. True Don'ties

55. Hindu frost

57. Perhaps no converts

58. Habit of dis-

72. Breeding culture

74. Subject of nature

78. Effect of climate

87. Vedas

89. Symbol of religion by Gurdam

102. Kandoo

103-6. Pilgrimage

107. Penance

108-9. Deshnu & tanks

111. Debating

120. Gamma of moral for right

122. Hardness of heart

-3. Beams

126-7. Bone - Devotion robes

154-5. Confusion of offices

159. Believing

168-9. A god made on the character of devoured body

175. pleasure of Brahmins

176-7. power of

214. practice to teach

DBF 192



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

Tennant
on the
Vol. I
Kimbrough



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

335

